

V Building in Outlying Areas

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General Guidelines for New Construction

The spacious unbroken landscape of the island is as precious to Nantucket as the architecture of the town and other old settlements; it serves as the background that gives them their dimensions. Historically, most of these outlying areas were 'commons' used by the community for sheep grazing, while the closely built clusters of Nantucket and Siasconset contained almost all the population (fig. 90). This tight pattern of development was maintained until the upsurge of development in the mid-1960s. In 1951 only 3.6 percent of the island's more than 31,000 acres was classified as urban or

Island Development History

developed land; by 1971, 7.5 percent was urbanized. By 1991, 33.3 percent of the island was developed, more than quadrupling island urbanization in just two decades. The area of land developed between 1951 and 1971 more than duplicated the total land developed during Nantucket's first 300 years of settlement, a figure that would jump by more than seven times over the next two decades alone. In 20 short years—from 1971-1991—a full one-fourth of the island's overall area underwent development.

The great increase in land used for buildings is due to a shift in new construction from town to larger lots in outlying areas. Almost all of the new buildings now brought before the Com-

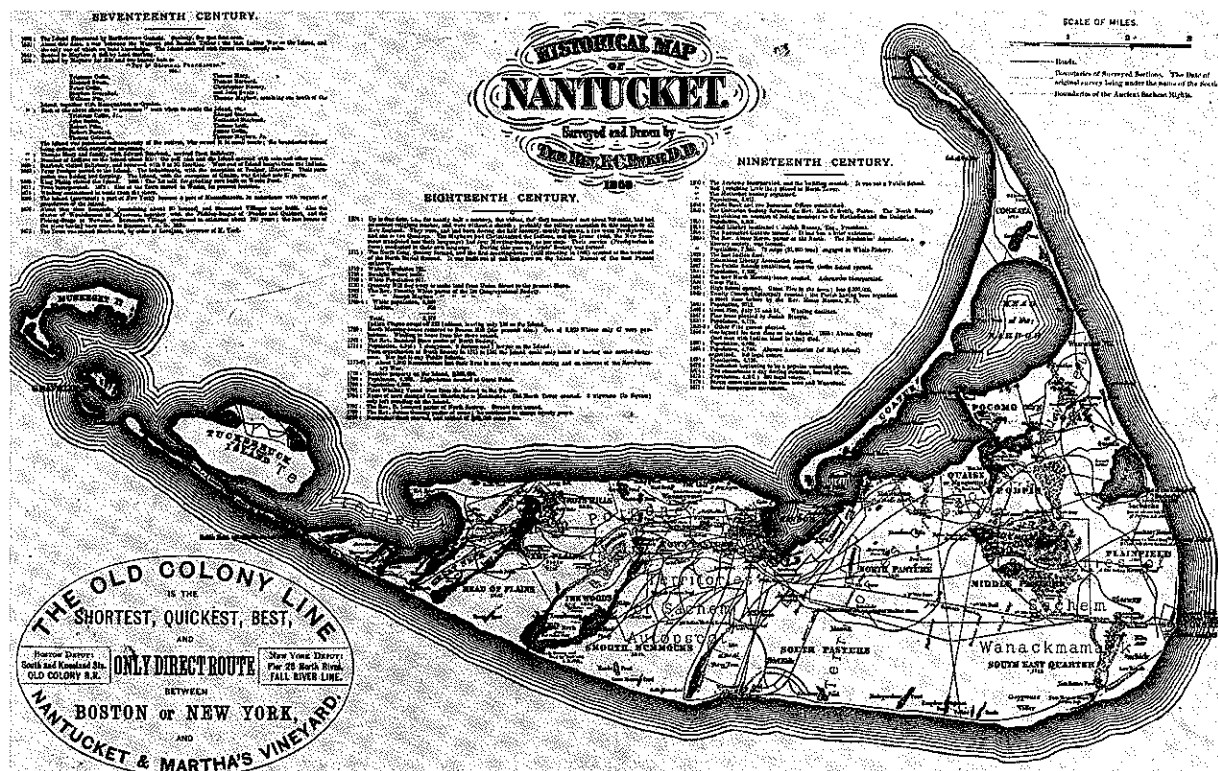


Figure 90. Historical map of Nantucket by Rev. F.C. Ewer, 1869.

mission for approval are single family, detached homes and the impact of this sustained growth is becoming more serious and noticeable with each passing year as large-lot development continues to consume the open landscape of the island.

Large-lot development is taking place for several reasons. Many people believe that their view is improved, their privacy guaranteed and their investment better protected if they live on a large lot. Furthermore, in 1972 Nantucket's first zoning law was enacted. More than 85 percent of the island was put into low density districts with a minimum lot size of 40,000, 80,000 or 120,000 square feet. Another four percent requires a lot of at least 20,000 square feet. Even without zoning, a house not located on land serviced by town utilities needs a lot of 15,000 square feet or more to add its own well and septic system.

This type of development pattern

has a pronounced effect on the island's architecture. At such low densities, buildings cannot be architecturally related to one another because space is not contained or defined. Each house is isolated in its own space but at the same time visually affects a far wider area of Nantucket's landscape. While its open landscapes and undeveloped moors have historically accentuated the compactness of the old Nantucket settlements, with large-lot development the island is being divided into tiny pieces, each claimed by a building. In this circumstance, if a building's siting and design are not sensitive to the land form, it can easily destroy for others the landscape qualities it was built to enjoy.

The architectural guidelines that follow are for areas of the island with no immediate established architectural context to which new construction should relate. These standards cover the land located beyond the limits of

Large-lot Development

the whaling era town, the small shoreline settlements and any extensions of these clusters at similar densities and patterns. The design policies for the outlying areas are derived, in large part, from guidelines for the old historic town, but are general and simplified so that they are more flexible and appropriate for contemporary needs. Because no cohesive building character exists in these outlying areas, the range of architectural possibilities is broader—as is the potential for visual chaos if new buildings are not coordinated with one another. Therefore, design guidelines are also imperative for these areas. Small, isolated Nantucket cannot absorb construction that detracts from the island's fragile beauty. These guidelines may also be utilized in the small settlements of the island where no consistent or predominant design concepts and character are displayed by the existing context of buildings.

Where houses are to be built on large lots in the open landscape of the island, additional guidelines have been established for site planning, bulk, massing and other primary aspects affecting their visual impact on the respective landscape types. (See *Building in the Open Landscape*, pg. 125.)

Site Planning

Multiple-unit Development When the development of a site involves several or more units—e.g., such as apartments, townhouses and condominiums—they should not be identical in form or of a repetitious design. The visually monotonous environment created by such development is completely out of character with the building and town traditions of Nantucket. Within the unity of architecturally related buildings, especially when built

in the same development, there must also be individuality. The island's sense of order and harmony does not imply boring and impersonal uniformity. Examples of past building construction that illustrate these principles well are the variations of the typical Nantucket house type in the whaling era town and the harmonious diversity of the centuries-old village, originally, of simple fishermen's huts. While these two models present a strong resemblance among the units of their groupings, each building has its own personality and identity. The variations and additions of any dwelling reflect its physical positioning and the needs and intents of its owners.

Two or more identical buildings in proximity to one another on a site will not be approved by the Commission. Further, in multiple-unit developments consideration should be given to the potential for alteration and adaptation of dwellings in the future.

Lot Layout The pattern and size of lots have a major effect on the visual quality of a development and a distinct influence on architectural decisions. In general it is recommended that lot sizes either be small enough that the buildings define the spaces between them and are interrelated in an architectural composition, or large enough that houses are clearly isolated in their own landscapes. The intermediate range of a 1/2- to 4-acre lot size may create visual problems because of an indeterminate physical relationship between separate buildings. The regular subdivisions of intermediate densities—e.g., 20,000 to 120,000 square feet lot size—cost more, develop more land and can neither contain open space between their buildings nor permit the landscape to contain the buildings. If the town of Nantucket had been devel-

**Apartments,
Townhouses**

**Subdivision
Patterns**

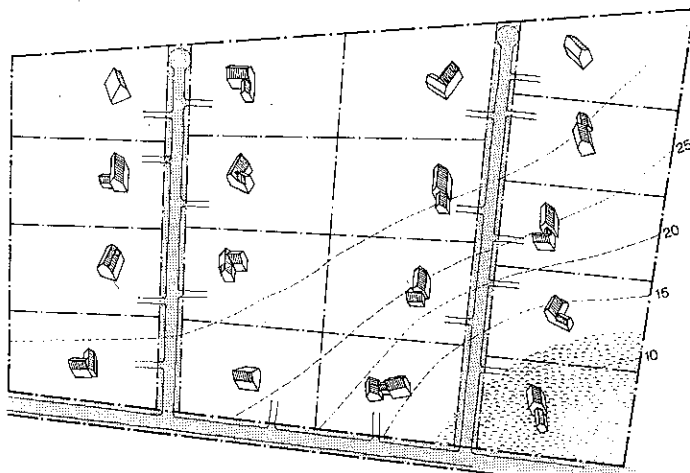
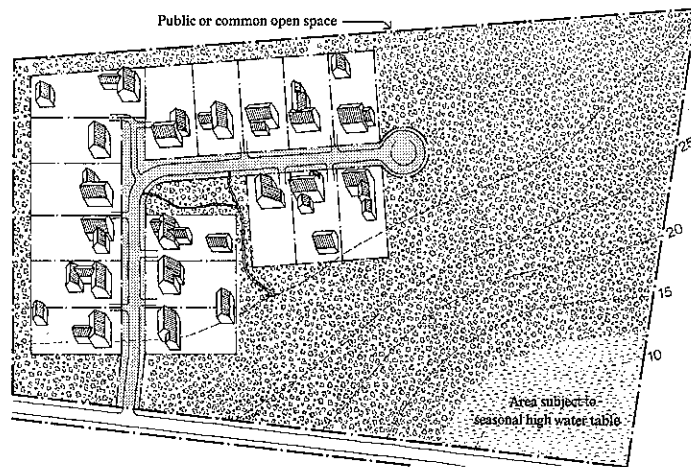


Figure 91. Uniform subdivision of 17 lots covering entire 15-acre site.



Clustered 17-lot design of 15 acres, preserving 60 percent open space.

oped at the density of 120,000-square foot lots, it would cover 7,000 acres, or almost a quarter of the island area. Moreover, at town density the similar alignment and spacing of buildings ordered by the street creates a unity among them, while at a lower density development frequently occurs in a disjointed, random or monotonous pattern.

The benefits of grouping houses closely together or clustering them are clearly demonstrated by the old settlements. They have a true sense of place in which single buildings are not as important as their overall fabric and scale. These guidelines strongly endorse the use of clustered development on the island to preserve the scenic and historic landscape and a setting compatible with the old settlements of Nantucket and Siasconset. Clusters have distinct benefits over regular subdivisions, in addition to the obvious advantage of using less land. Buildings can be related architecturally, so that they create places to be in and spatial sequences to follow. Close-

ness permits ease of pedestrian movement and chances for community interaction. Small architectural elements are noticeable. The scale of the environment is human and friendly. Meanwhile, adjacent open areas can be permanently preserved, and visually or ecologically important areas can be protected. Clustering houses makes better sense economically also; public costs for roads and utilities usually are less because of shorter lengths per unit. More money is then available for other community improvements and facilities. If higher gross densities are earned by clustering, land costs per lot are reduced. Clearly, clustered housing, a tradition on the island, should be used for new developments rather than a spread pattern (fig. 91).

Fences Where lots are sufficiently small (under one-third acre), new houses and development areas should also use fences or hedges to define spaces, to differentiate between the public and private domain, and to create a continuous edge on the street

Clustering Advantages

as well as unify existing buildings. (See page 63 for a discussion of the importance of fences in the town of Nantucket.)

Fences should be made of wood or stone and their design should be appropriate to the character of adjacent buildings. Fence layout should be in character with the setting and coordinated with adjacent fences. Those fences placed along the front of a house lot should not exceed 48 inches in height. Vertical board fences are not permitted along the front of a small lot. When used elsewhere, vertical board fences are not to exceed 48 inches in height for more than eight feet in length except to screen unsightly uses such as garbage storage and gas tanks. Fences over six feet in height are not permitted except in special circumstances, such as conflicting land uses. The Commission will not approve a 'spite fence', which is a public nuisance under the laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 49, No. 21. A spite fence "unnecessarily exceeds six feet in height and is maliciously erected or maintained for the purpose of annoying the owners or occupants of adjoining property".

Garages Reminiscent of boathouses or carriage houses of earlier times, early garages on Nantucket were out-buildings, separated from the house but sited in relation to it. Garages were normally set back behind the house but were, occasionally, located directly off the street in front of the house. This siting is generally limited to houses that front on the ocean resulting in the street side being treated as the rear of the lot. Attached garages should appear as an addition to the house, preferably accessible from the side or rear, as in the continuous farmhouse, typical in many parts of New England.

To maintain the fabric of island ar-

chitecture emphasizing traditional vernacular forms, special consideration should be given to the design of garages. Whether attached or detached, the garage should be an integral part of the overall design concept. The siting of a garage or its addition to a building should not be unnecessarily prominent. The face of the garage can be positioned farther back on the lot than the main wall of the house or the doors of the garage can be turned so they do not face the street or public view. Intervening buildings, fences or hedges can also be used to screen the garage and/or driveway.

Garage doors should be of wooden construction and compatible in design with their settings. Traditional garage doors are of three types: 1) boat house or carriage house doors -- a hinged system of two doors, equal or unequal in size; 2) the barn door -- an exterior mounted horizontal sliding door; and, 3) early garage doors -- vertical panels, track-mounted to roll away against one or both of the inside walls of the garage.

Unlike modern overhead garage doors, all of the traditional doors are vertical in design and orientation. The use of overhead doors is, therefore, strongly discouraged where highly visible along the street. In the historic districts, overhead doors are not appropriate except in cases of low visibility.

In general, garage doors should have details or textures that break up their large scale. For this reason, smoother flush doors are not considered appropriate. Garage doors should be painted to blend with the house and garage in order to minimize their presence. In an open landscape setting, it is recommended that they be painted a subdued, natural color to blend into their surroundings rather than white, which would make them stand out.

**Materials,
Layout,
Size**

**Siting,
Design**

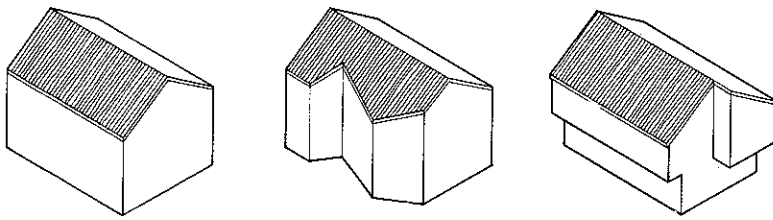


Figure 92. Simple volumes are preferred over notches, cuts and cantilevers.

Bulk, Proportion and Scale

Where new construction is adjacent to other buildings, it should establish a relatedness to them in terms of the primary visual aspects of bulk, height, massing and scale. In any close-knit cluster these factors are critical and therefore will be carefully reviewed by the Commission. (See town guidelines, pg. 66.) In open areas, these aspects of building must be sensitively designed to respect the nature of the landscape. (See Open Landscape guidelines, pg. 125.)

Massing

Simple Volume Shapes The underlying traditional form of Nantucket buildings—one or more simple volumes with sloped roofs—should be maintained. The masses should be regular in plan with slight variations allowed for site conditions. Permitted roof shapes are the gable, lean-to, gambrel and hip roof. Because the volume of Nantucket buildings have traditionally been compact and simple, cantilevered masses are generally not acceptable. Notches, cuts and insets in the simple volumes are discouraged, but may be considered if restraint is evidenced (fig. 92). In general, large freestanding shed roofs are discouraged, for they are neither traditional nor visually balanced. It is better to

integrate shed roofs into a balanced overall composition with gable roofs.

Flat building masses are generally not acceptable, except as small integral components of a larger building,

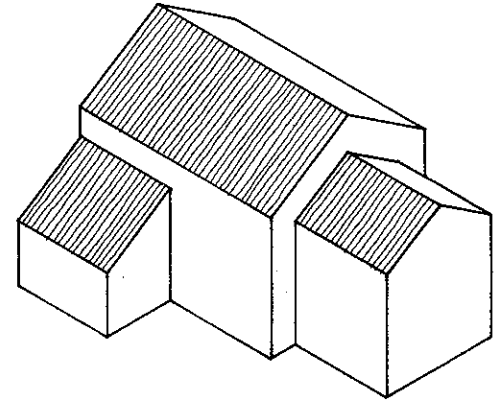


Figure 93. Additive massing of simple shapes is traditional and encouraged.

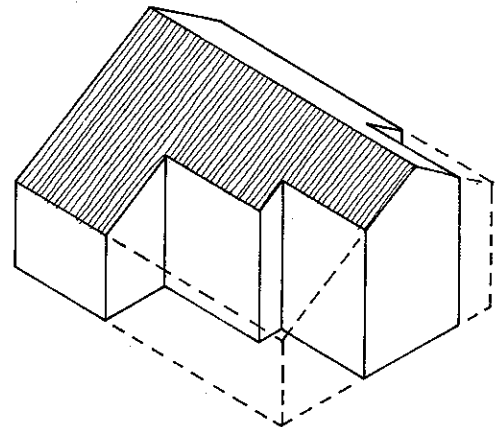


Figure 94. Subtractive massing may be visually ambiguous.

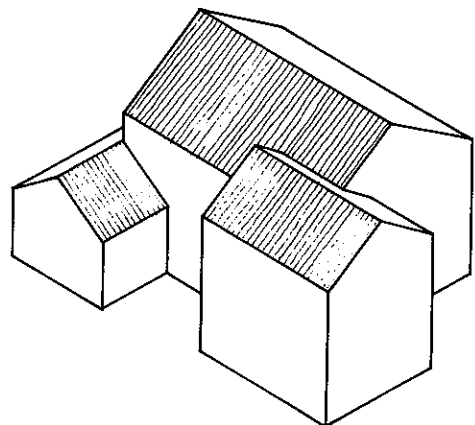


Figure 95. Interpenetrated massing needs concern for order and balance.

Roof Forms

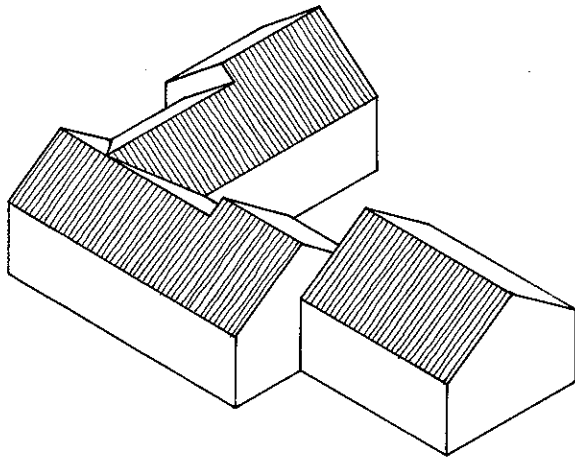


Figure 96. Unordered, chaotic massing.

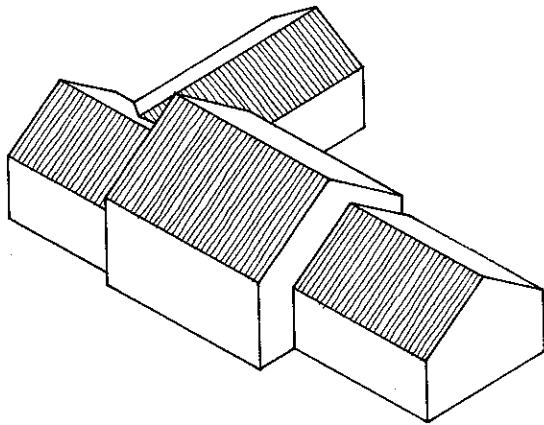


Figure 97. A larger or central mass orders a building of many parts.

because they introduce an unrelated shape rarely used on Nantucket. Round, angular or polygonal masses are generally not appropriate on Nantucket except for special structures, such as lighthouses and windmills.

Additive Massing and Complexity The historic method for creating a larger building was to attach simple volumes along its surface planes. This additive approach resulted in buildings that grew by increments into complex masses or were built as assemblages of simple shapes. It is preferred that new building massing follow this additive principle (fig. 93).

In a *subtractive* form of building shape, the plan shape is cut out from a single simple volume. While this ap-

Traditional

proach does unify the roof lines, it can be visually ambiguous because the eye may attempt to restore the missing parts to the volume or separate the shape of the building into smaller additive shapes (fig. 94). In many cases, it is better to articulate the separate masses than to use subtractive massing. Interpenetrated masses, of which there have been good examples among Nantucket's resort architecture, are the most complex forms and will be reviewed on their own merits, in particular, giving consideration to the order and balance they exhibit (fig. 95).

**Contemporary
Forms**

Massing Order As a building's massing becomes more complex and varying masses are joined together, order must be established to prevent a disturbing amalgam of shapes. When a single building is composed of two or more attached volumes having equal size and emphasis, a visual conflict may appear as a result of an ambiguous duality (fig. 96). A useful technique in ordering a complex building is to create a specific focus to the whole group of shapes by making one mass dominant by being larger or central (fig. 97).

**Main Mass
Dominance**

Compactness Tight building composition is a historic trait on Nantucket and adhering to this idea in new buildings will often help the balance and order of a design. For instance, it is generally better if two major masses of a building are joined by abutting one another than if connected by a small mass (fig. 98). Such a weak link sets up a duality between the two masses, each with its own visual axis. A small breezeway between a garage and its main house often exhibits this problem.

**Strong
Visual
Focus**

Roof overhangs, colonnades along outer walls and other structural exten-

Detracting Features

sions tend to conceal the shape and compactness of a building's mass. Because these features have not been used on Nantucket buildings and are adaptations from other climates and cultures, it is preferred that such features not traditional to island architecture be avoided except where necessitated by overriding functional considerations.

Placement of Windows/Doors

Balances Buildings without any windows and doors will balance visually around the center of their surface areas. Thus, a building will be balanced if the placement of windows and doors establishes a visual axis that coordinates with the visual axis of the wall surface. A conflict of visual axes in a design is disturbing and should be avoided (fig. 99).

Roofs

Types The sloped roof is a major visual component of a Nantucket house and is visible at a distance either in a harmonious rhythm with adjacent roofs or isolated in the open landscape. The sloped plane is an expressive form that, with the chimney, symbolizes shelter and warmth. The four main roof types permitted are the traditional gable, lean-to, gambrel and hip. The gable and lean-to roofs are suggested over the gambrel and hip roof, few of which have been built on the island.

Traditional Roofs

Pitch The pitch of a gable roof should not be lower than 7 inches vertical in 12 inches horizontal or more than 12 in 12

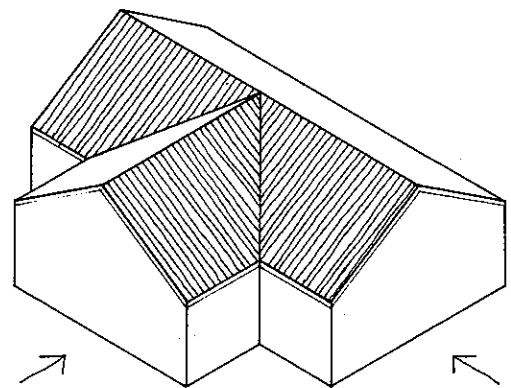
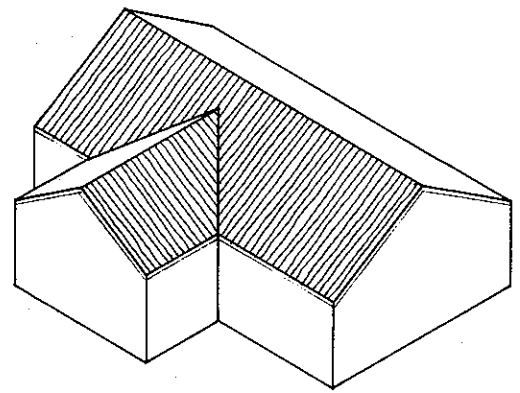
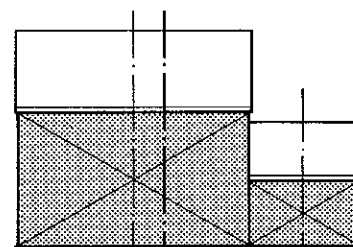


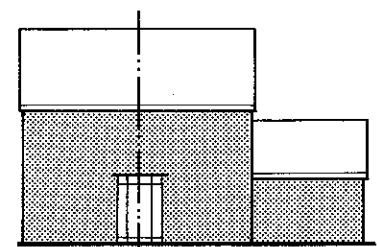
Figure 98. Equal size or emphasis may cause visual ambiguity or duality.



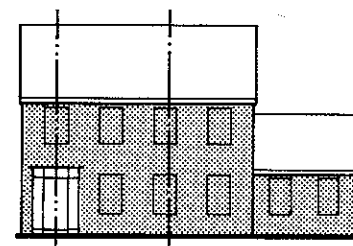
It is often better to make one mass visually dominant.



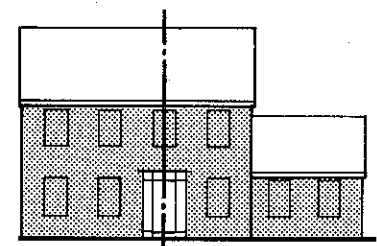
Visual axis of mass volumes.



Visual axis of major elements.



Opposition of visual axes.



Desired coordination of axes.

Figure 99.

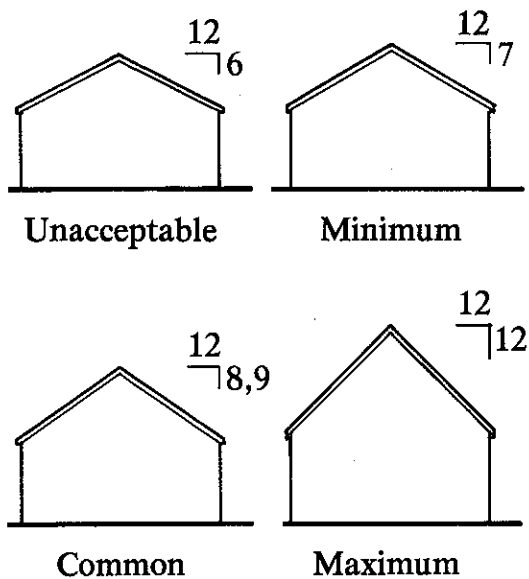


Figure 100. Roof pitch: minimum 7 in 12 inches; maximum 12 in 12 inches.

inches (fig. 100). In the interest of harmony among island roofs, a pitch of 8 in 12 inches is recommended. Small add-on sheds, or 'warts', may have as low as a 4-inch pitch. Gambrel roof pitches may vary, but they should follow the pitches and proportions found on historic gambrel roofs. Lean-to houses, inspired by the early practical roof type, have been much too often designed incorrectly on Nantucket in recent years. On a historic lean-to, the front and rear slopes were almost always of the same pitch, generally the same as used on gable roofs, 8 to 9 in 12 inches (fig. 101). Having one of two roof planes longer than the other does not necessarily constitute a lean-to roof. To prevent gross distortion of this distinctive building type, a lean-to design should follow its traditional form conventions.

7/12
to
12/12

Overhangs The overhang of the roof should be kept small, as is typical of the island vernacular. Large overhangs are discouraged but may be approved where they are necessary for specific functional reasons or other architec-

tural purposes, as long as they do not dominate the entire building (fig. 102). (See town guidelines, pg. 59).

Dormers Gable, flush and shed dormers are recommended dormer types (fig. 103). All dormers should be carefully designed and positioned to be in scale with the house and the roof and in balance with other features of that elevation of the house. A dormer should not obliterate the roof plane in which it is placed, but complement its slope. The dormer pitch and overhang and other detailing should be compatible with the main roof. Shed dormers should have at least a 4-inch pitch.

Where a house has a distinct front facade, it is recommended that dormers not be placed in the front of the structure. If dormers must be placed on the front roof, the gable type is preferred. If a shed or flush dormer is used on the front roof it should be of

Size

Placement

Incorrect ratios of roof depths and wall heights

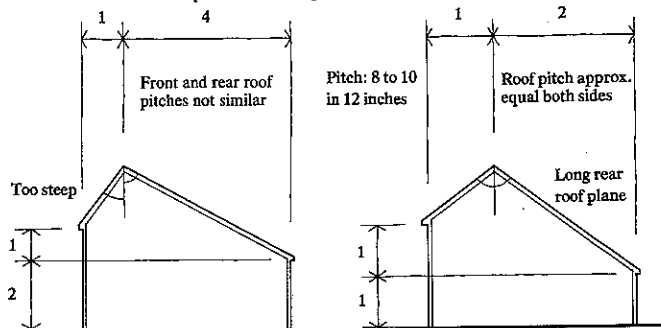


Figure 101. An incorrect lean-to roof and a proper lean-to shape.

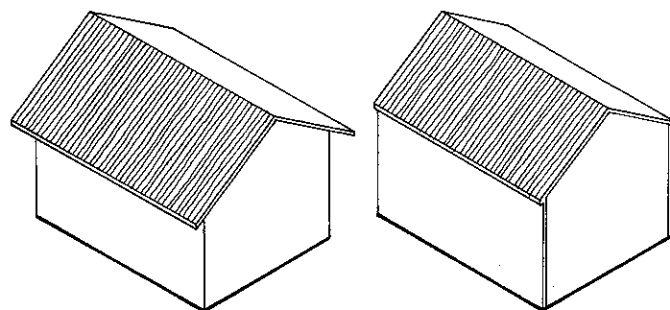


Figure 102. Large overhangs are not indigenous. Trim overhangs are island vernacular and preferred.

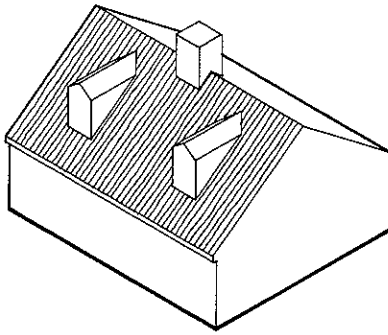
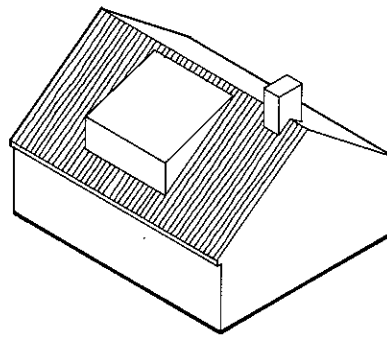
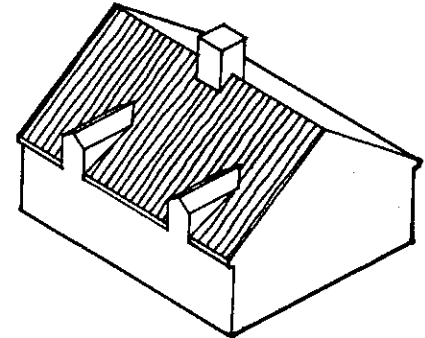


Figure 103. Gable dormers should be similar to the main roof in character.



Shed dormers should not be less than 4 in 12 inches in pitch.



Flush dormers.

modest design in harmony with the facade, achieved by using similar window types, casings, alignments, etc.

In general, the dormer face should be placed in the center of the roof, away from the edges and pulled back at least three feet from either gable end of the roof and at least one foot (preferably more) from the bottom edge of the roof plane (fig. 105).

Large shed dormers that extend the entire length of the roof are specifically discouraged because they are too dominant on the roof plane (fig. 104).

The use of dormers outside the historic districts follows the same guidelines. See page 71.

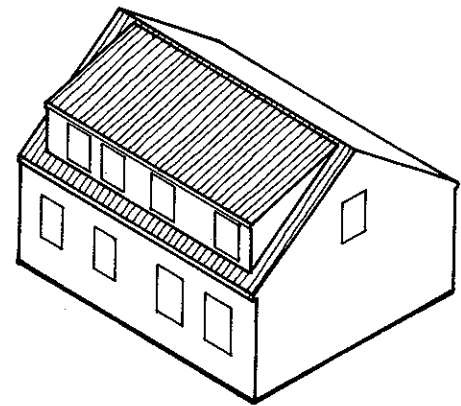


Figure 104. Large shed dormers obliterate the roof and are discouraged.

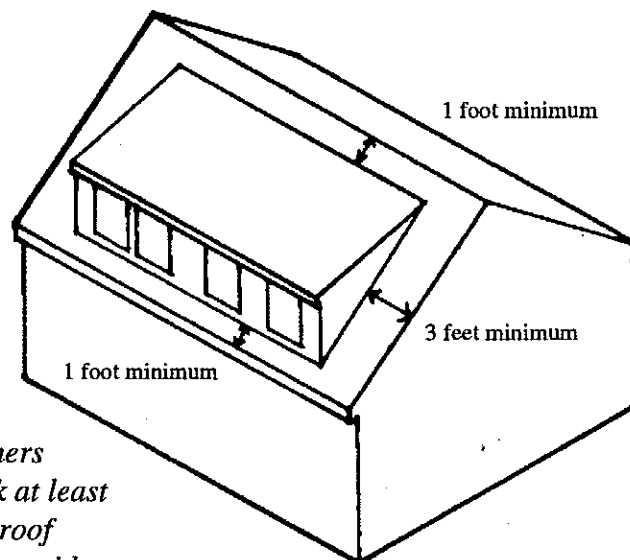


Figure 105. Dormers should be set back at least one foot from the roof edge, three feet from either gable end.

Skylights These windows in the roof are a recent development in Nantucket architecture. The closest historical precedent is the roof hatch, or "scuttle" of an old house, which permitted access to the chimney and roof of a building. Skylights should have a flat configuration, be parallel and as close to the roof plane as possible. Bubble or other protruding skylight designs are specifically prohibited. Skylights are not allowed on dormer roofs. HDC guidelines for skylight design are:

One skylight per roof plane only should be located in the upper one-third of the rear elevation roof planes and should not be larger than two by three feet. Metal skylights are not allowed in the defined old historic districts. All skylights within the old historic district boundaries must be constructed of wood and have true divided lights with muntins.

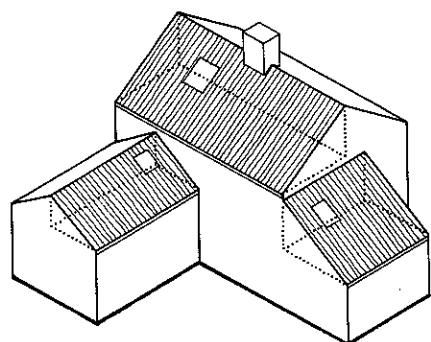


Figure 106. Standard skylight size is three percent of the floor area under the roof plane.

Chimneys Brick chimneys are recommended, not only because they are traditional but also because they have good characteristics of scale and texture

and they withstand the salt and wind exposure. If unpainted, the brick should be of a uniform dark color, preferably red. It is suggested that chimneys have a massive character, in keeping with the local character and evoking the image of warm fire and hearth in an exposed island setting. On larger houses, traditional interior chimneys are recommended over exterior chimneys. Fake brick chimneys are discouraged.

Metal chimneys are discouraged because of their initial shininess, eventual deterioration and flimsy appearance. Under the continual onslaught of wind and salt most metals erode, and the chimney becomes an eyesore. Where metal chimneys can be justified, their length should be kept as short as possible through proper location near the ridge line and they should be painted black or another dark color to eliminate their shininess.

**Materials,
Size**

**Metal
Chimneys**

Windows and Doorways

The fenestration of a building, that is, the arrangement of windows, should be designed as a careful response to its interior functions and organization and the features of its site. The window design will differ depending on orientation to a view, to the sun or to the space adjacent to the building, but in each case it is important that a new structure have the balanced and harmonious fenestration exhibited in old Nantucket houses, regardless of the increased range of window styles now available.

The design of fenestration should also take into account energy conservation and microclimatic factors such

Placement

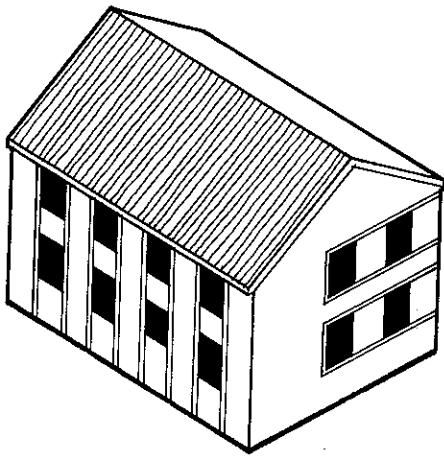
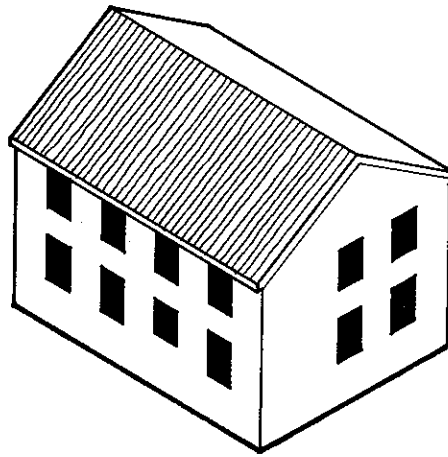


Figure 107. Windows bound by vertical or horizontal stripping.



Windows as holes cut in the continuous wall surface.

as sun position and wind. This was always the case in early houses, especially the lean-to design which had its two-story front of larger windows facing due south to capture the sun's heat. Today, when energy is so expensive and its sources are being depleted, such considerations are equally important. (See Appendix F: Selected Bibliography.)

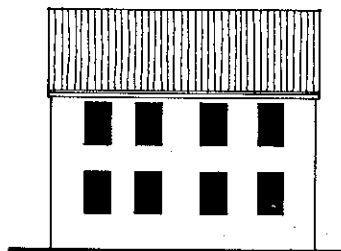
Window Expression It is recommended that windows in new buildings have a character similar to traditional windows, that of a hole cut into the wall plane and surrounded by the uniform surface. A window's position should not be bound by structural elements or other linear elements extended across the wall surface (fig. 107). The frame of the window should be used as it was in the past, as a border

Traditional Values

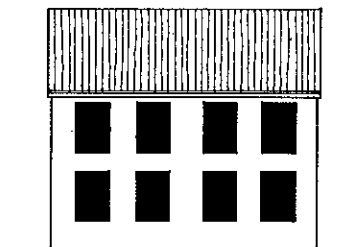
that accentuates the windows' isolated location within the continuous surface. The frame width, its protrusion or other shadow accent, and color can be used to emphasize this condition. Although, where justified by orientation or view, windows may be abutted to create larger openings of the interior to the outside, it is recommended that windows not be joined to create entire wall areas of glass with a predominantly structural expression.

The wall plane should contain the window rather than the window serve as the wall plane, thus maintaining a balance between wall surface (solid) and windows (voids).

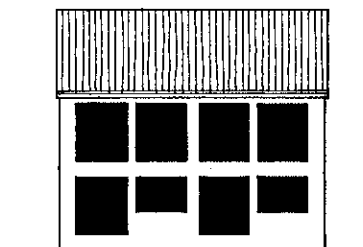
Amount of Glass The amount of glass on a building facade is largely a result of functional considerations such as outlook and solar orientation. However, extensive areas of glass are not always practical or desirable. Movable glass elements such as doors present problems as they do not promise a tight seal against wind-driven rain. Windows should be placed sensitively in direct response to the siting of the house. Careful, limited placement of them can focus on and emphasize views. A judicious window choice, rather than maximized window area, can create a more varied interior by



*20 percent
15-25 percent historically*



*33 percent
a large glass area*



*50 percent
excessive glass area
visually disruptive*

Figure 108. Ratio of solid (wall) to void (windows).

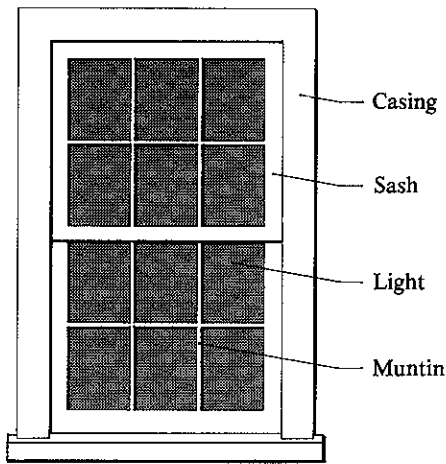


Figure 109. Window parts establish scale.

contrasting solid wall and opening, that is, enclosure and exposure.

The idea of a proper maximum ratio of wall area to total glass area is simplistic and inconsistent with the search for sensitive design solutions. However, it is generally suggested that when a wall plane becomes over 50 percent in glass area it will not be well suited, either functionally or visually, to Nantucket (fig. 108).

Window Scale The dimensions of a window are major contributors to the scale of a facade. A window's outer dimensions are its primary measurements, and the glass pane sizes or distance muntins are secondary (fig. 109). Windows and doors made of large sheets of glass have a greater scale than was used on Nantucket in the past. Such large, undivided blank

Not More Than 50%

areas in the building elevation contrast sharply with the scale of the wall surface texture and other dimensions of the facade. This is true especially of sliding glass doors.

For example, a 6-foot, 8-inch by 6-foot (or larger) sliding glass door exceeds the scale of a human figure and establishes a 40-square foot area as a single dimensional unit.

Furthermore, large glass areas, dark during the day and light at night, stand out visually at a greater distance and demand attention. As a practical concern, large sheets of glass may be shattered or blown out by high storm winds unless they are sheltered.

For these reasons, window types with large panes of glass, such as sliding glass doors, picture windows and other large, fixed-sheet windows should be used with moderation and handled with design sensitivity. Plac-

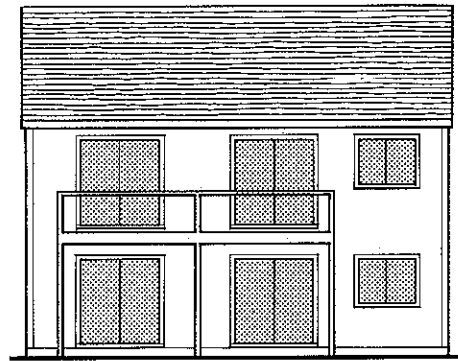


Figure 110. Sliding glass doors will create competing points of focus.

Avoid Large-sheet

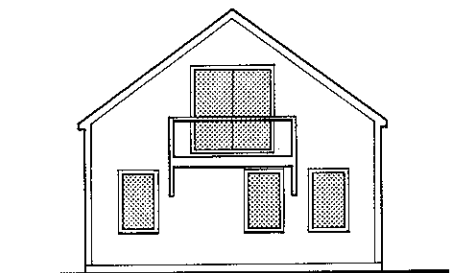


Figure 111. Sliders on the second floor or where out of proper scale are inappropriate.

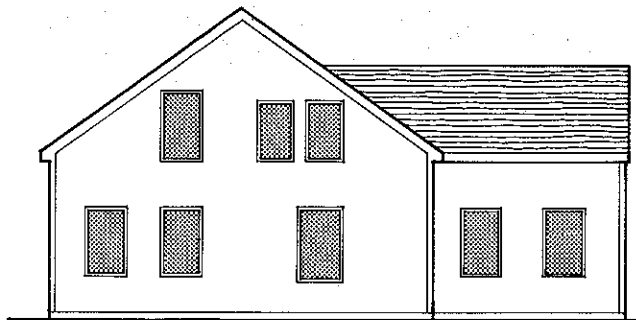
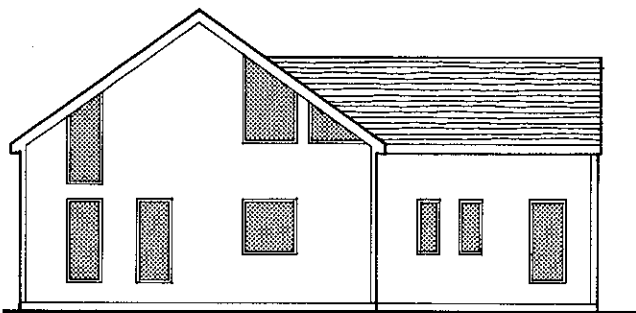
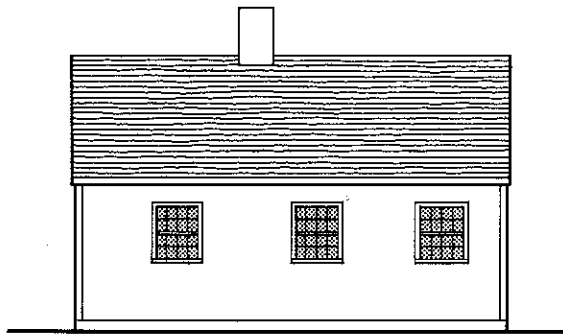
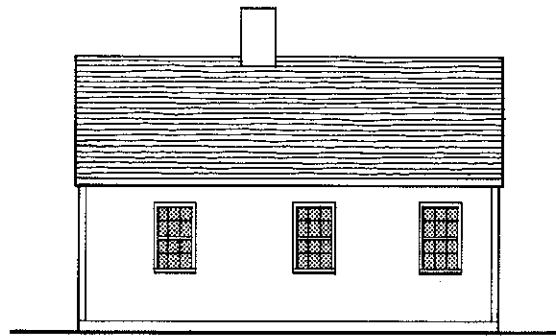


Figure 112. Oddly shaped or proportioned windows cause disharmony.



Too square, not traditional



Pleasing, balanced rectangles

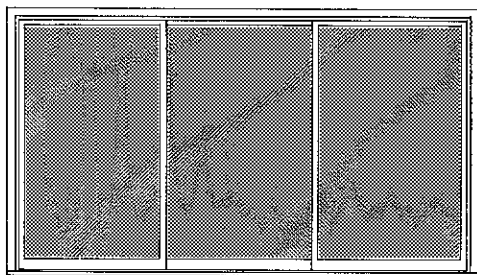
Figure 113. The proportions of windows alone make a great difference.

ing them in a wall plane receded from the major wall plane of a building facade can soften their visual impact.

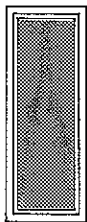
Sliding Glass Doors

Preferred sliding glass units include those made of wood and with fixed muntins. These resemble French doors and are, therefore, more visually pleasing than standard sliding glass doors. No sliding glass unit will be permitted in the front of the house. The shape of each unit may create a competing visual focus on the facade (fig. 110). Furthermore, the Commission recom-

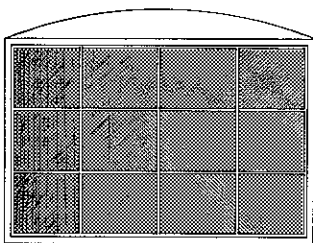
mends that within any view of a house (two sides) no more than three sliding glass units be visible. Sliding glass door units over eight feet wide are not acceptable. It is preferred that it be used only on the ground level of a building. If used on the second floor, it should be inconspicuously positioned. A slider should not be used when it is out of proportion to the area in which it is to be placed, such as in a small gable end (fig. 111).



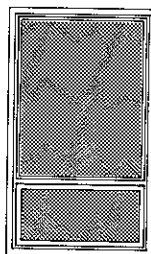
Sliding glass doors over eight feet wide



Tall narrow casement windows



Curved bow windows



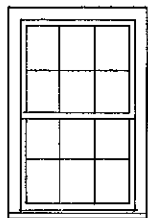
Awning or hopper windows (Flexivents)

Figure 114. Windows with inappropriate characteristics are discouraged.

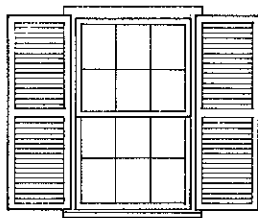
Harmony and Unity of Fenestration A Nantucket building shows a harmony and unity of fenestration along all its sides. Limiting the different types and shapes of windows is an effective way in which to relate all the fenestration of a house. A consistency of placement and casing will also create a unity among the windows. Although considerations such as view and solar orientation may justify a difference of fenestration among the exposures of a building, all sides should be expressive of the same design character. For example, a building with only double-hung, small-paned windows on three sides and on a fourth primarily sliding glass doors unrelated to the others in scale, etc., is visually disjointed.

Limiting Window Types

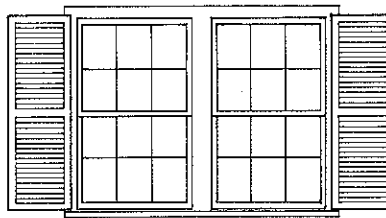
Shape and Proportion Non-rectangular or irregularly shaped windows



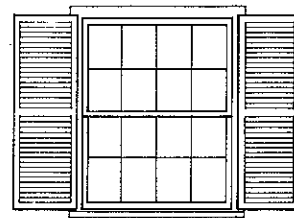
A well-proportioned window does not need shutters.



Each shutter should be one-half the window width.



Improper use of shutters.



Shutters that are too narrow.

Figure 115. Shutters.

such as trapezoids and triangles are generally not approved, except in special circumstances where they are integrated into the design in an inconspicuous manner and are important to the interior concept (fig. 112). Round windows and other symmetrical but non-rectangular windows may be used for accent or special emphasis. Windows should have visually restful proportions. The use of several separate square shapes, which create competing focuses, or long rectangles, which are strongly directional and assertive, should be avoided because they detract from the repose of the wall composition. Intermediate shapes used in the past are recommended, e.g., length to width, 2.5:1, or less. Such proper window proportions alone contribute greatly to the appropriateness of a building on Nantucket (fig. 113).

An example of common misuse of window proportion is evident in the overuse of half-round windows that was popular in the 1980s. Half-rounds (also known as fanlights, lunettes, half-moons and fans) are self-defining. An ornamental detail used sparingly in the early Federal period on Nantucket, the proliferation of half-rounds in recent years has not only diminished the effect of the carefully applied traditional ones but has also lost sight of the relevance of proportion. Oversized and suspended half-rounds which do not relate to either the apex of the

**2.5:1
Or
Less**

elevation's gable or to an actual Palladian window arrangement (see glossary) are not appropriate on Nantucket.

Rhythm and Balance The alignment of windows horizontally and/or vertically creates a rhythm of wall and window that gives the necessary order and unity to the facade. A more dynamic or asymmetrical balance, seen often in the side walls of early Nantucket houses, may also be used.

Window Types Windows should have wooden sashes and frames. Metal windows are discouraged because of incompatibility with wooden structures and surfaces and because of eventual salt air deterioration. They are not permitted where visible from a public way. The use of some window types is discouraged because of awkward proportions and other characteristics that are inappropriate on Nantucket—e.g., Flexivents, tall narrow casements, sliding glass doors over eight feet wide, and bow windows (fig. 114). It is recommended that snap-in muntins not be used inside new windows to simulate small-paned sashes because they are barely visible on the exterior and may not be replaced after cleaning.

**Types
to
Avoid**

Shutters Shutters are discouraged on new houses if they are intended only for surface decoration. Good proportions of fenestration can be as

Types

effective aesthetically and more appropriate to the island. An alternative to exterior shutters, seen in some 19th century houses, is the use of interior ones. It is recommended that vinyl shutters not be used at all; they will be approved only when over 40 feet from any public way. In the natural landscape, the formal visual emphasis of bilateral shutters is not fitting; the straightforward expression of building shape and window location is more appropriate. Shutters are interpreted visually as part of the windows' interruption of the wall surface. As a result, they change the proportions of the window areas within the wall surface and the spaces between, causing a sometimes awkward appearance. Therefore, the combined effect of the shutters and windows must be considered. Moreover, shutters or other window covers attached to a building should be functional and operational. If bilateral shutters are used, they should be of the same height as the window and each one wide enough to cover half of the total window area (fig. 115). If windows do need movable covers, single side-hung board doors may be better proportioned and more appropriate to a vernacular design or informal setting.

Must Work

Main Entrance

Exterior Doorways A doorway is a critical feature of a building's wall composition because people experience it directly by moving through it. A pleasant sequence of space and visual features such as walkways and landings leading to an entrance are important. The main entrance to a building, used by visitors, should be located where visible or otherwise clearly revealed so that there is no uncertainty as to the proper approach. The character of the traditional Nantucket entranceway, prominent in front

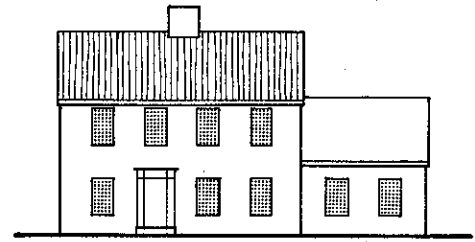
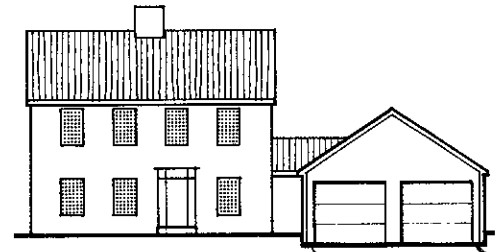
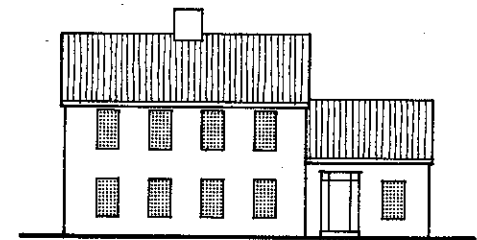


Figure 116. Main door prominent in forward-most plane.



Inappropriate prominent projecting garage doors.



Inappropriate main door in small mass.



Inappropriate main door in lean-to or side of lean-to.

of the main facade, is a good precedent to follow. It is neither convenient nor enjoyable to circumvent the garage in search of the main door. In this humid, windy climate a recessed entranceway may not be as protective as an interior vestibule.

The entranceway, if articulated, creates a focal axis on the building facade that should be coordinated with the rest of the design, including the massing balance. An entrance door may

Placement

appear out of balance if it is placed in a small mass alongside a larger main structure. For the same reason, it is recommended that main doors not be placed in the side of a lean-to (fig. 116).

The doorway design should be compatible with the setting of the building. For example, in natural landscape settings a classical column and pediment on the entrance would not be fitting.

Exterior Architectural Elements

Architectural elements such as steps, platforms, railings, porches, decks and roof walks are valued, character-giving and functional components of the design of a building. (See town guidelines, pg. 80, for a discussion of their importance on historic Nantucket buildings.) Visually, their small-dimensioned parts give scale to the building's mass and contrast with its plane surfaces. They enliven a house while maintaining its simple massing. Although not as important as primary design decisions (such as siting, massing and fenestration) in establishing compatibility among different buildings, these elements influence the personality and identity of each building. They are individual expressions of the owner, designer and builder, and are encouraged. Because the smaller elements are more important to the perception of the building as one gets closer to them, their design will be more closely reviewed by the Commission in settings of higher density.

Door Platforms and Steps New Nantucket buildings can adapt the characteristics or the designs of historic doorsteps and platforms to enhance their entrances and achieve a Nan-

tucket expression. The platforms and steps are an effective transition from the outside to the inside of the dwelling. Where houses are close enough, in lots of 10,000 square feet or less, these doorway elements should be connected to the space-defining edges along the street, such as hedges and fences and walls.

Adapt Historic Designs

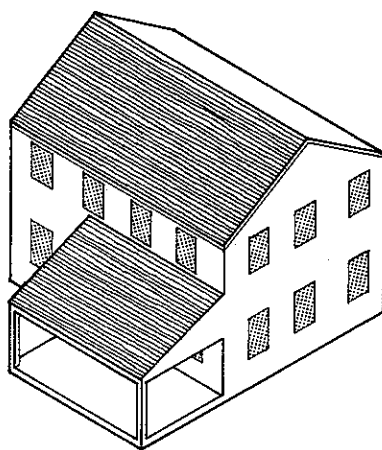
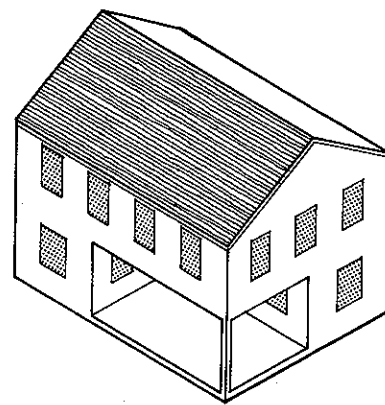


Figure 117. Porch as additive volume.



Porch as void cut into massing.

Refinements

Porches Although not utilized in Nantucket before the Civil War, porches and verandas have been enjoyed as pleasant features of vacation homes since then. They can be incorporated into a building design as a simple additive volume, as an exterior space cut out from the simple mass, or as a combination of both (fig. 117). In addition to providing a sheltered exterior living space or screening, porches are beneficial to a house design by creating: (1) a transitional space from the house interior to the outside, (2) a transition in scale of massing from the building mass to the ground level, (3) a visual interest of shadowed volumes as part of the building, and (4) a reduction of the visibility or prominence of large areas of glass facing a view (fig. 118).

Advantages

In general, porch design is more ap-



Figure 118. Porches are inviting transitions from the interior living space to the outdoors.

Design

appropriate to a Nantucket building if kept simple and straightforward. If a porch is designed as a simple additive mass, a sloped roof will relate it to the main structure. If cut into a building, an important detail is the corner of the porch and its expression of the outline of the complete building volume.

Decks Currently the most popular way to incorporate exterior and interior space, decks pose certain intrinsic design problems. Most notable among these is their visual impact as something imposed artificially on a building mass. Roof lines help integrate porches into the mass of the house but decks have no such aid. Consequently, they tend to 'stick out', particularly when built above ground level.

To ensure that decks be a visual complement to the house as a whole, it is crucial that they be as well integrated as possible, specifically through appropriate scale, placement and detailing. The skill with which a deck is incorporated into the building mass determines whether or not its overall

Placement

size is suitable for the house. An elevated deck, particularly those extended outward from a house, should not be out of proportion or balance with the building mass to which it is attached. The greater the height of the deck above ground, the more disruptive its visual impact. Decks isolated in midair on spindly supports, for instance, are visually precarious and awkward, and will not be approved. Decks should not exceed 30 percent of a structure's perimeter.

Therefore, the Commission prefers that decks be built as low as possible. Elevated first floor decks will be restricted so as not to intrude on the natural surroundings. In the case of all elevated decks, however, the massing of the house should be used to anchor the location of the deck. A deck, therefore, could be: 1) placed into a corner of the massing with walls on two sides, 2) set partially into an inset of the building's massing, or 3) placed on the roof of a small mass subsidiary to the main structure (fig. 119).

Details

A porch roof over part of the deck or an open structure, such as an arbor or pergola, could give the deck a feeling of greater substance as well as enclosure. Attention should be paid to the size and detailing of the supports of the deck, so that they appear proportionate, sturdy and attractive. A raised deck, with a ground level porch underneath, is another method for integrating an elevated deck into the overall massing of the house.

If anchored by massing along two

Integrate into House as a Whole

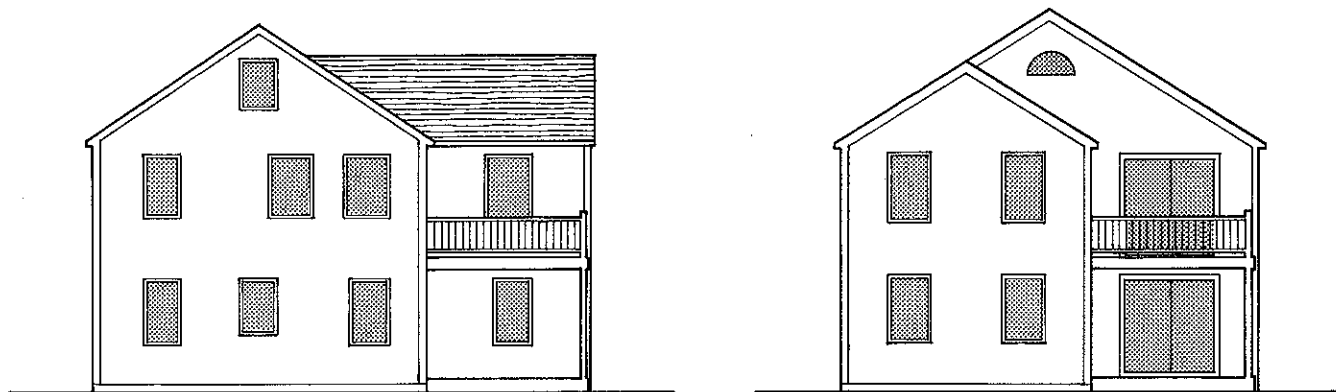


Figure 119. Decks anchored by building massing.

sides or by an inset into the building's massing, a deck of a depth greater than eight feet may be approved, according to the quality of the design (fig. 120). A deck built on a level roof must not be too large in relation to the main mass.

The detailing of railings should be used to coordinate the decks visually with the house. It is suggested that the railing on a deck exhibit the open character and simple refinement of traditional exterior elements such as door stoops and roof walks. Open railings rather than solid walls reduce the effective size of the deck and contrast with adjacent solid-wall surfaces. If over three feet in the air, a deck should have a railing and balusters or other side members spaced close enough for child safety. There is no reason why any deck should not have the refined detail and individuality invested in other exterior architectural elements of the past.

Roof Walks In general, roof walks should follow traditional design and construction detail (see fig. 78, pg. 83). Roof walks and other high platforms built to provide vistas to the sea and over the landscape are permitted if carefully designed with the building and not visually dominant. They should not conflict with or overwhelm the clear expression of the roof shape, but should be designed to enhance it. The

roof platform is less dominant visually and more related to historic forms if its top edge is open and it is of small wooden construction.

The following recommendations apply: The clear expression of the roof slope should not be obliterated; skirts, or solid aprons, under the platform are not appropriate; and access should be obtained from a traditional hatchway, or scuttle, with a wood cover. Because roof walks were historically found on houses of two or more stories, they are not appropriate on 1- to 1½-story structures.

Cupolas Cupolas, lanterns or belvederes set on the ridge of a roof, were not used on Nantucket until around 1800. These cupolas, usually with fixed windows on four sides, were spacious enough to be small rooms unto themselves affording excellent views without the discomfort of exposure to the elements that roof walks allowed. At the same time, they 'crowned' the structure.

An alternate use for cupolas was strictly utilitarian. Farmers on Tuckernuck, for instance, found them useful as ventilators for barns and other out-buildings. Used in this way, cupolas add additional light and air circulation to structures that are long, low, dark and sparsely fenestrated.

Cupolas, today, when used appro-

**Appropriate
Design**

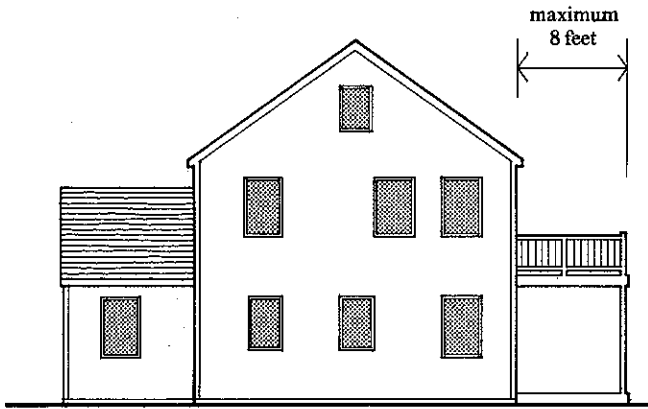


Figure 120. Maximum extension of isolated deck, eight feet from wall plane.

Siting, Size, Screening

ply: Satellite dishes should be placed where they are least obtrusive, that is, as hidden from public view as possible. Additional important considerations to lessen the impact of these intrusive elements are: color, which should be subdued, either dark green or black; and landscape screening. Trees, hedges and scrub growth can be employed to help hide the dish from public view without compromising its effectiveness.

priately, can function in either or both of these manners and at the same time have the design benefit of modifying long roof ridge lines.

Satellite Dishes In outlying areas, where cable access television service is not available, satellite dishes are a solution to poor television reception. These freestanding, receive-only antenna, however, are not noted for their aesthetic value. Rather, their reflective surfaces and large size make them highly intrusive, especially on the island's relatively flat topography as well as in or around its villages and the town itself.

At a Town Meeting in 1990, the impact of these devices on the historic fabric of the island was addressed and the resultant by-law deemed that satellite dishes will be treated as 'structures', within the meaning of the Commission's enabling act. They do, then, qualify as 'exterior architectural elements' and require careful placement when visible from a road or public way.

Although the Commission's jurisdiction over satellite dishes is expressly limited by federal regulation to reasonable aesthetic objectives, the siting, size, color and screening are factors well within that jurisdiction. The following recommendations, then, ap-

Secondary Dwellings See page 65 for guideline requirements related to size and siting of secondary dwellings.

Surface Materials

The walls of Nantucket buildings in the past have exhibited a great similarity of surface characteristics and material that has given Nantucket buildings visual cohesiveness and harmony. Where the buildings are different shapes and sizes, such as in Siasconset, the use of a single surface material has provided a fundamental relatedness. In the same way, large buildings of many parts or of complex massing have been unified by a shingle surface.

Wall planes should be of a single, small-scale, textured, natural material. Standard materials are 5-inch exposure white cedar shingles, 3½-inch exposure wood clapboard and brick of a uniform dark tone and color. On small subsidiary parts of a building or for special accent purposes, other textured natural surface materials, such as wood boards or natural stone, may be used if integrated sensitively into the total design.

In low density areas, where the natural landscape dominates, only shingles are recommended. The rustic wood shingles weather to a natural tone when

exposed to the elements and their small-scale texture and shadows are in harmony with the fine texture of the natural vegetation. Because clapboard was traditionally applied to more formal, classical styles of architecture in town, its use in the outlying areas is, generally, not desirable. Further, its strong linear pattern and uniform painted tone are not as compatible with the informal naturalistic setting. When clapboard is used outside the Old Historic Districts or their immediate surroundings, its use should accommodate the Commission's objective to make buildings blend into the open landscape, not stand out in stark contrast to it.

Foundation Materials Exposed foundations may be of: (1) select common brick of a uniform dark color (unpainted), (2) stone, (3) concrete, or (4) cement block that has been parged or grouted if visible from a public way or a neighboring lot. Buildings raised in the air on pilings are discouraged. If a building requires pilings, it may not be sited on land suitable for a building. Except for harbor structures, buildings raised above land on pilings should enclose the area beneath them in order to visually connect their masses with the ground.

Roof Materials Roof surface materials should be fire-resistant asphalt shingles of rectangular design and of a uniform dark color, or natural wood shingles. On 20th century buildings, the roof color should be of a single hue that is a dark, subdued tone in harmony with the building color and that of neighboring houses. Roofs of a light gray or white color are specifically inappropriate on the island, especially in the natural landscape where seen at a distance (in contrast with the dark surroundings and background).

Small-scale Materials

Pilings

Types, Color

Trim and Miscellaneous Details

Trim and detailing on new Nantucket houses should generally be of the same character as seen on historic houses. Essential qualities are simplicity, economy and visual refinement. Builders and designers are encouraged to put extra attention and refinement in the details and trim of a building to insure its individuality and personality. For example, the traditional horizontal protruding plank above the window, while very simple, gives special accent to the window and facade.

Main trim boards on the surface of a house should be wide enough to create a tight weather seal against moisture and storm-driven rain. An adequate width or other dimension is also necessary to provide a strong visual border around the edges of wall planes and windows. Exposed rafter ends are appropriate only when interpreting typical styles such as Craftsman, Stick or Gothic Revival. (See town guidelines, pg. 85, for discussion of using cornerboards, rakeboards and trim.)

Trim Boards

Gutters and Leaders Gutters and leaders of wood are preferred on wooden buildings. If non-wood gutters are used, they should be coordinated with the cornice detail and painted to match the adjacent cornice of trim.

Louvers, Vents etc. See town guidelines, pg. 86.

Colors

The colors of a house should reflect the character of its setting and harmonize with adjacent buildings. In town-density residential areas, the standard



"The Crooked House" near Smith's Point is a delightful example of additive massing.

approved colors are appropriate (see town guidelines, pg. 88). Other colors may be used if Commission approval is obtained in advance, as long as they are in harmony with the color balance of the area. In low-density areas, where the landscape contains the buildings, the predominant colors of the setting are the natural tones and hues of the vegetation and the ground. In areas like this, the objective is to make the buildings blend into the open space, rather than stand out in contrast to it.

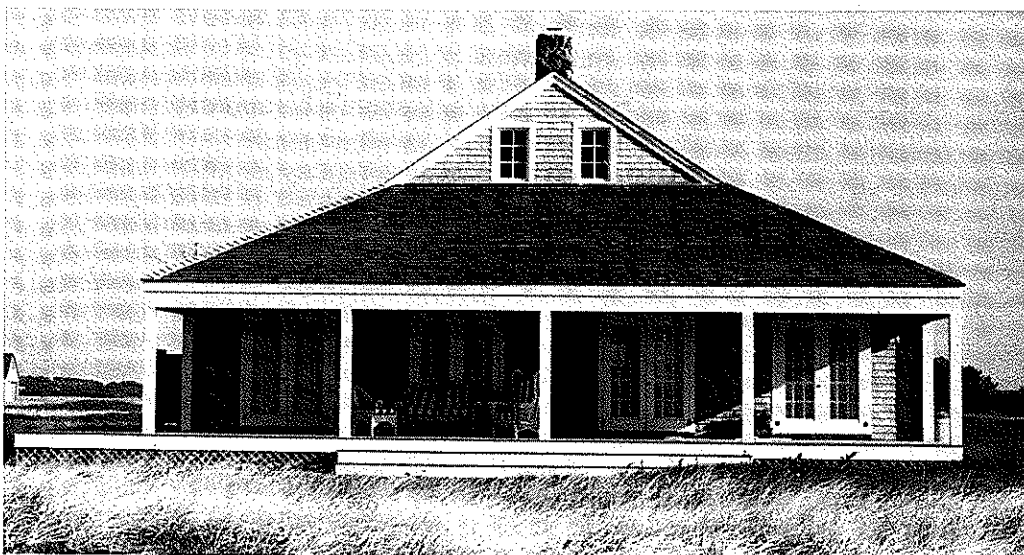
On low-density housing, the predominant color will be the weathered wood surface. Other exterior wood, e.g., trim, may be left in a natural color

Complement Environment

also. Painted areas on the houses should reflect the palette of nature. Browns, greens and grays of subdued intensity and of medium value are recommended. Small-scale trim and exterior elements may be painted white, if done consistently on the building. Accent colors on small areas of details of the building may be used. Wood stains are acceptable to treat and color parts of a building if they have the same color characteristics required of painted surfaces.

Where there is any question as to the appropriateness of a color, the approval of the Commission should be obtained.

The Commission maintains a list of traditionally approved colors.



A fine example of new building in the outlying landscape — this cottage overlooks the south shore at Miacomet.



Stairway to 'Sconset beach.

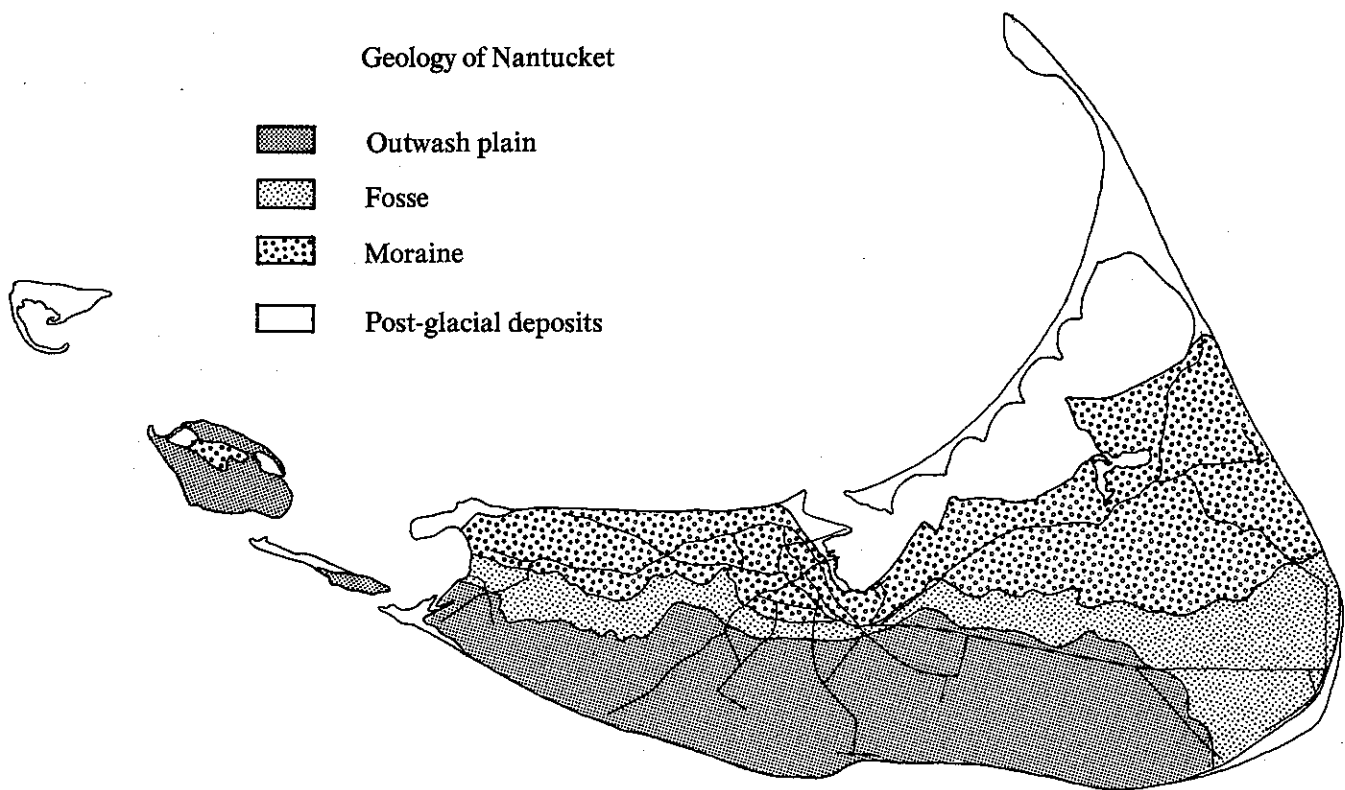


Figure 121. Geology of Nantucket.

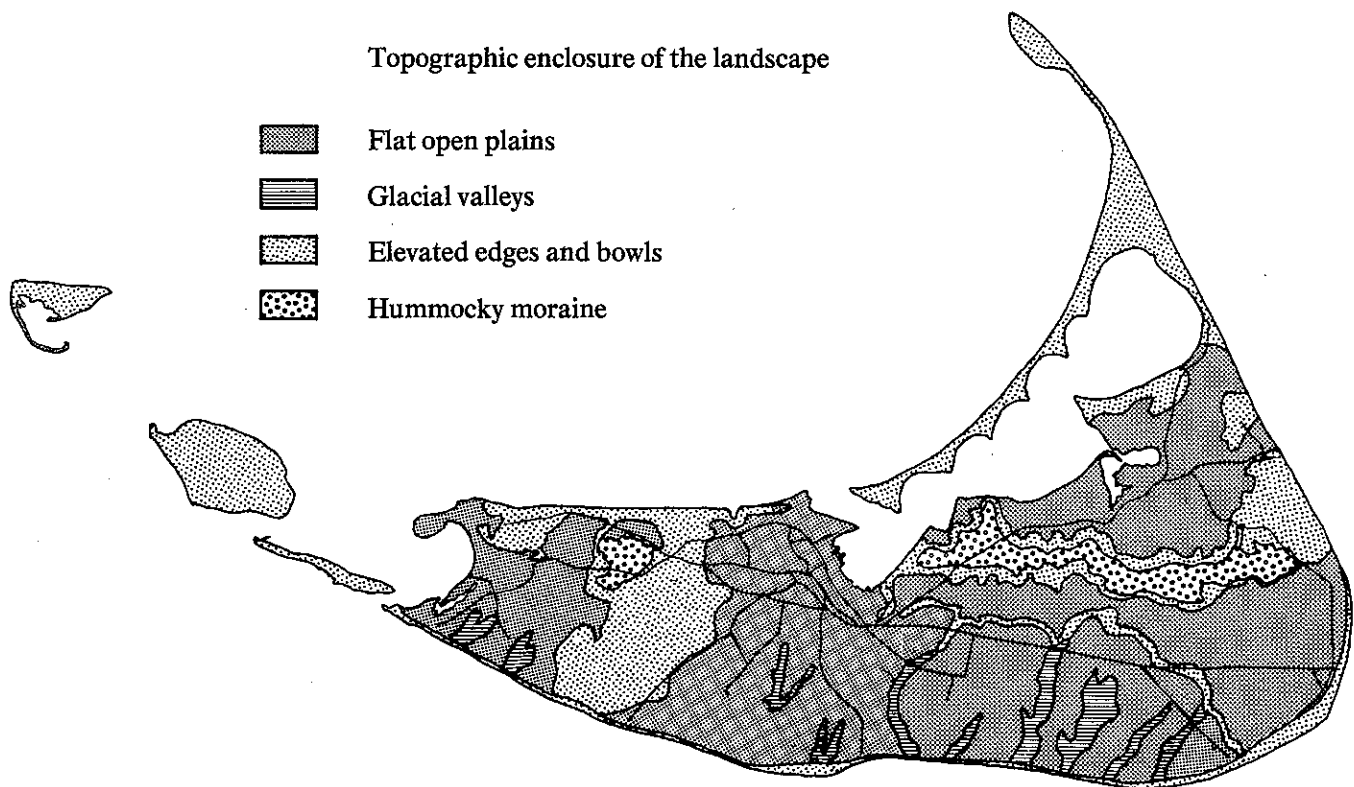


Figure 122. Topographic categories on the island.

Building in the Open Landscape

It is the landscape of Nantucket that gives the human presence on the island its meaning. The treasured settlements and the timeless structures were created out of response to this finite environment. Today the moors, beaches and undeveloped expanses perhaps draw more people to the island than quaint Main Street. And yet, the open landscape is Nantucket's primary and, therefore, most exploited resource.

It is imperative that all who are making decisions affecting this island back-drop understand the implications of their actions. For this reason, instructive guidelines are included here to discuss the impact of new construction on large lots according to the predominant landscape types of the island. The intent of these principles is the continually expressed desire of islanders, off-islanders and the state and federal governments to preserve the existing character of Nantucket. Rather than serving as strict legal rules, these guidelines are intended as positive statements coordinating the numerous building decisions and anticipating their aggregate effect on the open landscape of Nantucket.

The natural landscape of Nantucket island is varied: beaches, moors, ponds, plains, bluffs, marshes, etc. This diversity is caused by (1) its geological history, (2) the vegetation that has grown on the land, and (3) the activities of men and women—exploitation, adaptation and preservation. The constant factor, of course, is the sea, an ever-felt presence. The sandy borders between the land and sea are continually being shaped and altered by tide and wind.

Because the island is low and generally level throughout, it is possible to see across wide expanses. Therefore, any building that is too prominent or in a highly visible location can be seen from a long distance and over a large area. Only a few houses like this will quickly destroy the landscape's serenely scenic qualities. With the expectation of numerous houses to follow on their own large lots, the design of houses to be put in these open areas should seek to minimize their visual disturbance of the island background. The landscape itself provides the only possible unifying element and harmony between scattered 'isolated' houses. The degree of a building's visual impact is determined by the character of its setting and how a building responds to that character—i.e., the shape of the land, its elevation relative to surroundings, adjacent special features, bodies of water and vegetative cover. To blend in, a building must contribute to the feeling of the land, not oppose it. To do this, a good design will express a sense of the landscape—that which is characteristic and special about the site. Conversely, a building that appears oblivious to the setting in terms of siting, shape, scale, fenestration, etc., will disrupt the unity of the landscape and one's perception of it.

Previous research, *A Natural and Visual Resource Study*, analyzed the island to determine its different landscape types. The identification of a landscape type was based on the combination of topographic land form and predominant height of vegetation. Each type was characterized by its ability to absorb new development without damaging its special visual qualities. This analysis indicated where on the island buildings can expect to be most intrusive.

Island Landscape Characteristics

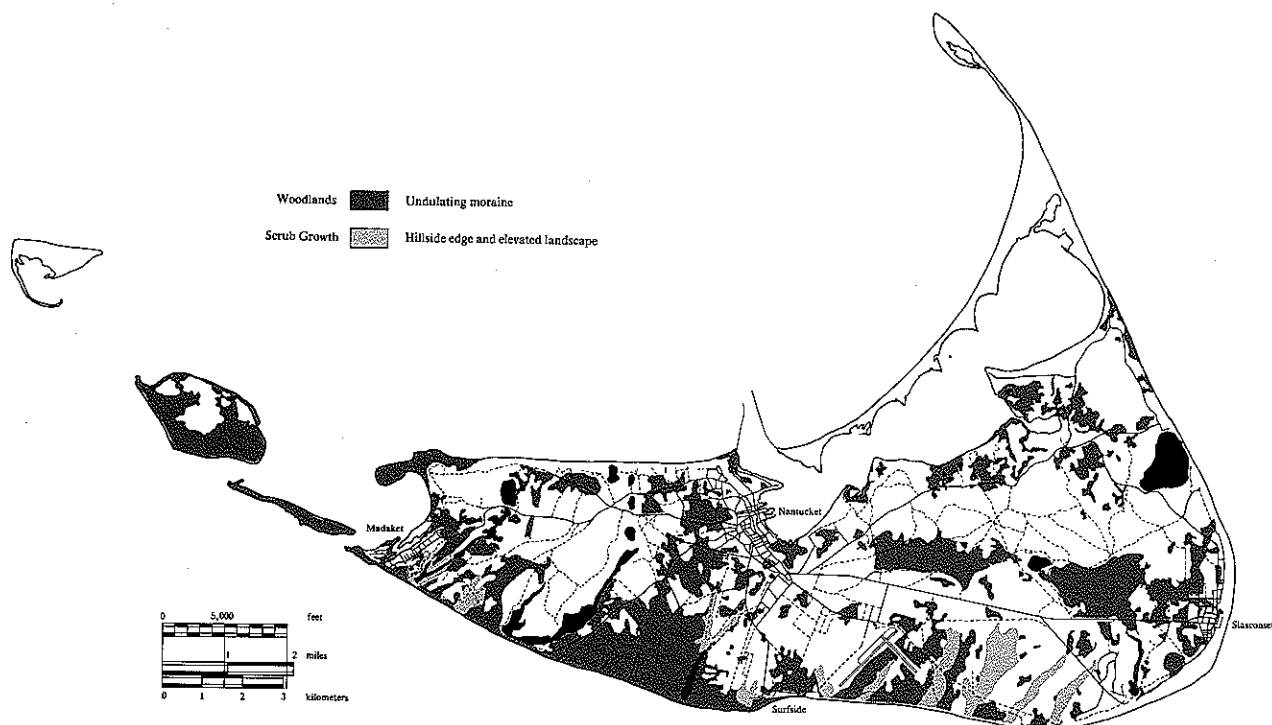


Figure 123. Open plains and glacial valleys.

The *vegetative cover* of the island was divided into three height categories closely related to the types of species found in them. The *low vegetation* is six inches to four feet in height, such as heath, grasses and hedges. The *medium-height vegetation* includes taller woody shrubs barely over 10 feet in height and low climate-pruned trees of similar height, mostly scrub oak. The *tall vegetation* group includes wooded areas of deciduous, coniferous or mixed species that are more than 20 feet in height. The boundaries between these groups are not always abrupt or regular, but many graduate from one group into another.

Topography The topography of Nantucket has been formed primarily by weathering of materials pushed here by the Wisconsin Age glaciation roughly 10,000 years ago (fig. 121). A line across the middle of Nantucket was the southernmost advance of the ice sheet. This ditch-like edge is called a fosse. The northern half of the island, the moraine, was deposited as the glacier

melted and retreated. Its hummocky terrain was created by piles of debris dropped by the glacier and the melting of imbedded blocks of ice called kettles. Rivers and streams ran seaward, south from the receding glacier, carrying till and sediment with them. The deposition of this material created the flat outwash plain that still reveals the channel scars of the glacial rivers. Where dammed with sand, they now contain long catchment ponds, such as Hummock and Miacomet Ponds.

Four topographic categories have been identified (fig. 122): (1) The *moraine*, with its rolling hummocky terrain, may visually absorb development due to numerous lower elevations and intervening hills. (2) The *valleys*, or channel scars, are linear depressions that run north-south for continuous lengths of one-half to two miles. (3) The *outwash plain* is generally flat and, along the coast, very exposed, with long uninterrupted vistas that make development here particularly visible. (4) *Linear hillsides* and edges along beaches that are con-

tinuous and elevated make houses visible at the greatest distance. This grouping includes the cliffs and the fosse areas of the island as well as bowl-like depressions such as that containing Sesachacha Pond.

From this analysis differentiated guidelines have been developed for major landscape types of the island, according to their individual characteristics and sensitivity to new development. The recommendations that follow deal with siting of the buildings and other related aspects that affect their harmony with the landscape. Discussion of each landscape type first presents a characterization of the landscape to identify it and to foster a sense of the setting, followed by suggestions based on the cumulative effect of construction of many new buildings.

Open Plains

From Siasconset to Madaket along the South Shore are the level open plains created by the wash of till and sediment from the glaciers to the sea (fig. 123). They primarily support low-height vegetation from a few inches to

several feet tall. The oak woodlands of the Indians are long gone. These areas were divided into quarters and farmed briefly beginning in the late 18th century, but the soil was quickly worn out and then abandoned.

Today this landscape is predominantly covered with the heath plant community unique in New England. **Vegetation** Its most typical plants are the ground-hugging beach heath (also called poverty grass), lichen and bearberry. These hardy plants must survive the strong salt-laden winds that sweep across the broad open plain from the south. As a result, the plants along the coast are kept to a maximum height of 6 to 12 inches. As the distance from the shoreline increases, the plants gradually become taller, ranging up to about four feet in this landscape type. Common heath species are bayberry, low blueberry, low huckleberry, sweet gale and sweet fern. The inland edge of the heath plant community is slowly being taken over by invading shrubs and scrub trees.

On poor soils or areas of exposed subsoils, the heath ground cover represents the first stage of plant succes-



Figure 124. Building in the expansive open plains.

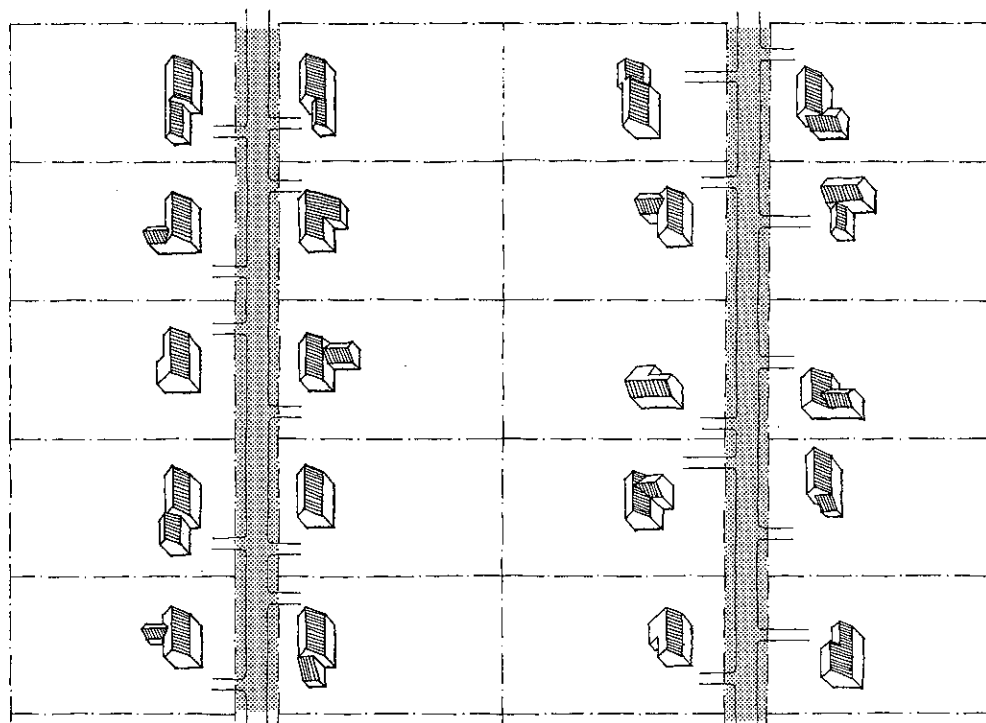


Figure 125. Equal spacing or setback is monotonous.

sion. Important and beautiful as it is, this low heath is easily damaged by physical abrasion. Where vehicles have roamed across the landscape the heath vegetation has died. Even the one-time passing of a vehicle may cause destruction of the ground cover.

Other vegetation types in this landscape include cultivated farm fields and grass meadows. Small areas of salt marsh and fresh water marsh, flat with low grasses, reeds and sedges, have also been included in this classification.

The major quality of the open plains is its expansiveness, its uniform-height vegetation that stretches to the sea (fig. 124). With nothing to intervene, distant buildings and places are easily visible. There is no shelter in this landscape; everything is exposed. Hurricanes roaring up the coast assault the island along its open southern edge. Tightness and lowness are responses of survival. The horizontal line of the land rules here, and no vertical elements occur naturally to indicate the

Exposed Position

Cluster Lots

obliterate the original character of the land. Even a few lots are better clustered so that the houses can be placed closer together with more openness around them, thus breaking the visual monotony of houses equally spaced on uniformly sized lots.

Minimum Visibility

Road Layout Roads and drives will be visible in any case, so they should be minimized, combined wherever possible, or slightly depressed. In flat and open areas, main roads should follow a straight or long curved line, not wander arbitrarily.

Shared Orientation

Building Siting If buildings are spread out but are less than approximately 200 feet apart, a shared orientation will give them a sense of relatedness when seen together across the landscape and is preferred to random placement. When oriented similarly, varied setbacks and spacings between units can be used to avoid monotony (fig. 125). As a way to define exterior spaces associated with the house and

measure of distance. Therefore, the illusion created is that this landscape is larger than it really is. Such spaciousness, especially of such a tenuous nature as Nantucket's, is easily destroyed by buildings that change the scale of the landscape, stop the eye and force it upward rather than along the ground plane.

Site Planning, Lot Layout Clustering of lots and houses is more critical in these areas than in other landscapes because scattered tall houses will

to keep the size and scale of buildings small, the house may be designed as a group of buildings clustered together, including the garage and other out-buildings.

Bulk and Scale In this open landscape, the bulk and scale of a building are the most important aspects of its design. They should be kept small. The exposure to the elements in this landscape has historically kept buildings in a low profile. Large-scale structures will diminish the unbounded scale of the outwash plain. They will break the land's horizontal line with their protruding shapes, and their tall walls will shorten the perception of distance along the ground plane (fig. 126).

The simplest way to reduce a building's scale is to break its bulk into smaller adjoining masses. In this way the outer dimensions and areas of the wall planes will be smaller and less imposing and will lessen the vertical emphasis of the dominant mass, carrying the eye back to the ground (fig. 127).

It is recommended that buildings not exceed 25 feet in total height and not have any two-story walls (fig. 128). This 25-foot height policy will be strictly adhered to in the open areas that are uninterrupted to the shoreline, such as along the South Shore. Where

clumps of tall vegetation are found within the landscape, or where other special site conditions exist that could mask a structure's height, a building of a greater height than recommended may be approved. A tight cluster of buildings surrounded by open landscape may exceed the height restriction, but it is recommended that its height taper down to one story at its outer edges.

Massing Because buildings on large lots in this landscape will be seen from a distance profiled against one another, it is important that their overall visual character be related, especially their masses. The similarity of sloped roof planes is important. Massing should be of gabled volumes of different sizes, with sheds attached or integrated with them. Shapes that emphasize verticality, such as gambrel roofs, are discouraged. Building masses crowned with hipped roofs or other single, central peaks are also discouraged because they create a point of focus along the horizon that claims the eye. Instead, a horizontal ridge line is preferred on the flat, open plain.

Gabled Volumes

Roofs The clear expression of the roof plane is one of the most prominent and essential features of building in this landscape. It is recommended

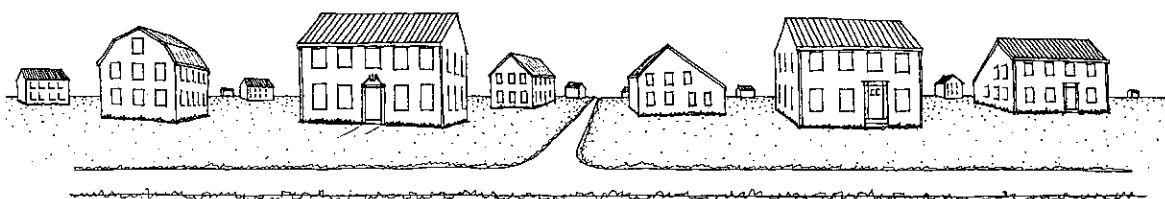
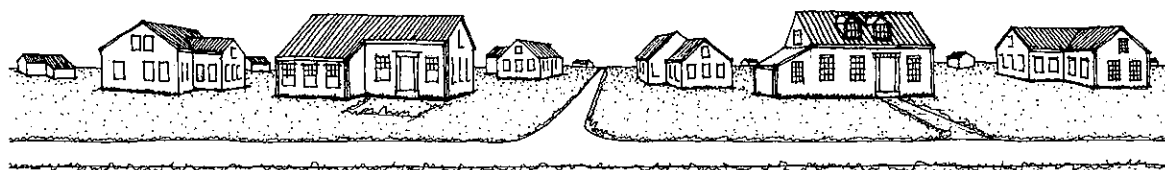


Figure 126. Tall buildings disrupt the open plains.



that all main roofs use a 7- or 8-inch in 12-inch pitch to establish a unity among them. Large shed dormers that cover most of a roof plane are specifically discouraged. Chimneys are expressive architectural elements when viewed across the plains, especially if interior and large.

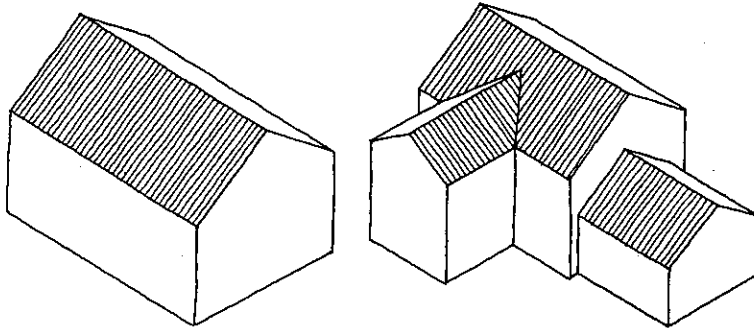


Figure 127. A single large block shape.

Same volume reduced in scale.

Retain Ground Cover

Natural Vegetation and Plantings The sense of unlimited space in the horizontal landscape is created in part by the continuity and undisturbed character of its low ground cover, emphasized by the subtlety of color and texture of the vegetation. The unity and scale of this landscape can best be maintained if the natural ground cover is disturbed as little as possible. Therefore, it is recommended that the house claim only as much outdoor space as it needs for its access and attached exterior living spaces, and that a clear distinction be made between the built environment of the house and the natural landscape. Rather than cutting the land into yard fragments or large lots, it is advisable that the natural ground cover extend up to the dwelling.

Hardy Species

New Plantings It is very difficult to grow taller plant types in the exposure of the coastal outwash plain. All plants in this area must tolerate salt, wind and dryness. The best plants to use are either indigenous or such hardy species as Japanese Black Pine, Russian Olive and Rosa Rugosa. Shelter from the winds is important for new plantings. Plantings can be used around buildings to soften the transition from the vertical wall to the ground. An informal, naturalistic planting design is more in character with the landscape than formal designs. Linear and regular-shaped forms such as hedges are best used only as architectural extensions of buildings, along the lines of fences or walls.

Simple Cuts

Driveways and Paths The area for driveways and paths should be minimized. They may be simply cut through the natural ground cover, only as wide as needed to accommodate wheels and feet. Single lane roadways with turn-outs for passing can be used to reduce the size. Shared driveways, rather than unnecessary duplications, are recommended (fig. 129). Parking spaces are best kept small and close to the structure or integrated with it to reduce their presence in the landscape.

Fences Where houses are sited on large lots, fences are not necessary or appropriate, as they are in town. Fences conflict with the primary goal of continuity in and with the natural landscape because they interrupt and divide it. In general, it is best if fences



Figure 128. Maintain a low height in the outwash plain, maximum 25 feet.

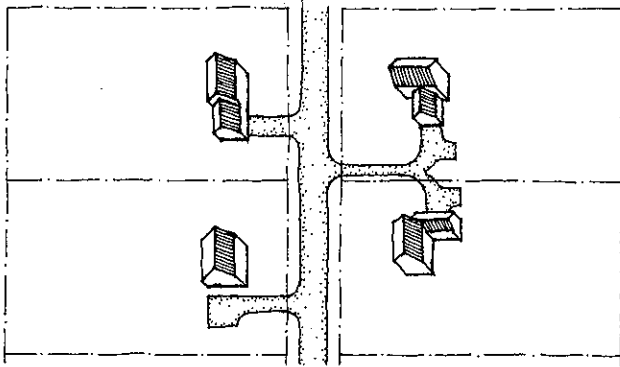


Figure 129. Combined driveways reduce land disturbance.

and walls are kept close to buildings in order to maintain a unified, compact structure separate and distinct from the natural landscape. This type fence, used to enclose or define exterior space adjacent to the building, is fitting if related in form to the building or connected to it. The design is best if simple in treatment and left a natural wood color.

Boundary fences intended to visually define the limits of one's property or large open areas are discouraged. Where fences are needed, such as to enclose animals or prevent unauthorized access, they will be approved. Where used, a fence should be of a visually open design through which the landscape can be seen. Horizontal fence members will harmonize best with the ground plane. Fences of natural rustic materials, such as split rail, are recommended.

All other general guidelines apply. Because of the visibility of buildings in this setting, whether near or far, extreme care must be given to their design. The impact of oversized fenestration and monumental facades is extremely noticeable and detrimental. Elevated decks not integrated into the building design are

Boundary Fences

particularly objectionable. Overall building modesty and horizontal profile are important.

Glacial Valleys

The outwash plain, which extends south from the terminal moraine area of the island, is dissected by ancient river-channel scars once fed by melting glacier ice (see fig. 123, page 126). These are the narrow glacial valleys of the South Shore, running north-south to the sea, the largest of them being Madequecham Valley, which reaches inland more than 9,000 feet from the ocean (fig. 130). At their coastal ends these valleys have been closed off from the sea by sand deposition, thus forming catchment ponds such as Long Pond and Miacomet Pond. Periodically storms breach these dune barriers and flood the valleys toward the center of the island. As a result, the fresh water ponds become brackish, limiting their ecology to salt-tolerant species. In 1954, a heavy storm caused a breakthrough at Hummock Pond, temporarily connecting it with the ocean. In some valleys, such as

Geography



Figure 130. Madequecham, a glacial valley.

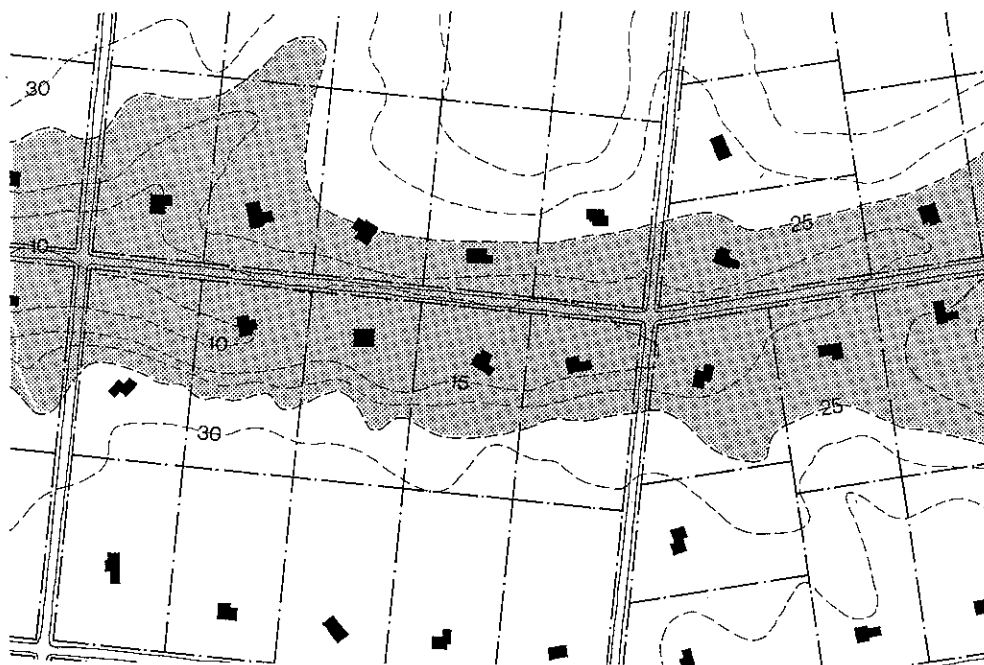


Figure 131. A uniform subdivision obliterates a glacial valley.

Nobadeer, ponds no longer exist because of evaporation and sand deposition over many years. They hold water only after storm flooding or during the seasonal high water table.

The glacial valleys are important not only as visible accounts of the geological history of the island, but also as physical and visual corridors in the

Vegetation

low due to its wind and salt exposure and periodic flooding. In the bottoms, which have ponds, richer soils and closer access to water than higher ground, foster the growth of grasses, sedges and reeds. On the exposed slopes, the fragile heath plant community predominates. Further inland, where not trimmed back by the elements, some glacial

valleys have been taken over by taller shrub growth.

Because of their distinctive beauty and narrow area, the glacial valleys should not be developed at all. They are natural and logical open-space corridors that can serve adjacent development on the plains. Because of the valleys' fragile vegetation, potential for storm and sea flooding, and poor septic-system drainage (pos-



Clustered lots and houses keep open the glacial valley axis.

ing the threat of ground water pollution during the seasonal high water table), the higher areas are better suited for development than the valleys.

If any structure is built in the glacial valley, the primary goal for its placement and design is to maintain the essence of the valley, to preserve its linear axis, and to preserve the land as the primary form of the place, with building secondary or merged with it. Because buildings will be most prominent when seen from the center of the channel scar, careful consideration must be given to the aspects of the buildings that face into the valley.

Site Planning, Lot Layout When development does take place in the glacial valley, lots should not be laid out in its bottom; instead, they should be clustered along its sides in order to keep the linear axis intact and open through the glacial valley (fig. 131). Where a valley is quite wide or has only small side slopes, it is recommended that at least the central one-third of its width remain undeveloped. A linear lot pattern along the side slope could provide a view into and through the valley for all and a pattern and rhythm of houses in harmony with the landscape.

Road Layout The road can be closely related to the ground form. A good alignment will run with the valley along a side slope or with the gentle curve of the land. The movement through the valley along its axis heightens a person's sense of the valley, as is observed along existing sand tracks in several of the valleys. Conversely, several roads crossing the valley perpendicular to its axis will cut up the valley visually. All new roads should be kept inconspicuous by restricting disturbance of natural vegetation.

Building Goals

Building Siting Buildings should be sited on or at least near the side slope of the valley, never into its center (fig. 132). Nor is it good siting to locate them at the top of the slope where their entire mass will be starkly silhouetted

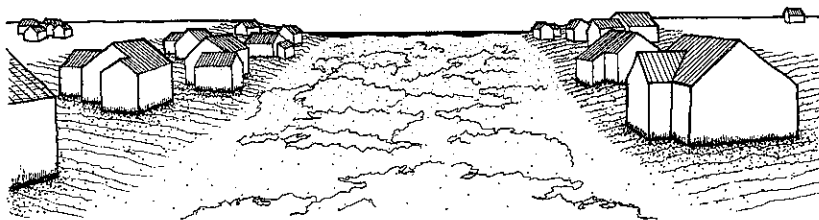
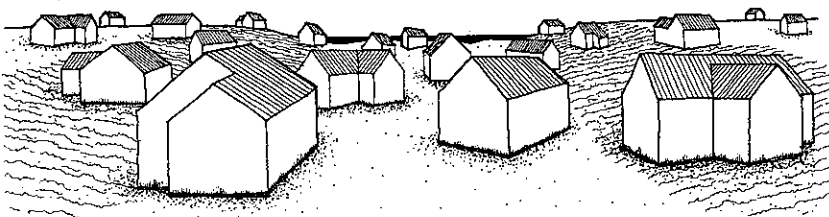


Figure 132. Houses sited low and to the side of the glacial valley.



Houses sited in the center of a glacial valley.

Slope Clusters

against the sky. It is better to bring them down the grade so that the slope contains the buildings and serves at least as a partial backdrop for them.

Grade Contours and Foundations

The continuity and integrity of the valley land form is important to maintain. Where a building is placed on a side slope, the design of the unit can relate to the change in ground level about it. It is improper to place a home designed for a flat site on a sloped site in a manner that interrupts the natural ground line. Noticeable large flat areas or bank cuts around houses are discouraged. The foundations of buildings should be small to help the building keep a low profile.

Compatible with Landscape

Inconspicuous Design

Preservation of Natural Vegetation

Where the vegetation is in the heath plant community, it is recommended that it be disturbed as little as possible because it is fragile, yet well adapted



Figure 133. The Nantucket shoreline as seen from Tupancy Bluff.

to the site conditions. Periodically, larger invading plants should be cleared out to prevent overgrowth by shrub or scrub oak growth.

Clearings

Where vegetation is already higher, such as shrub growth or thickets, it can be cut back to better reveal the land form, make open settings for houses and create vistas through the valley. In general, the clearings should not be in straight lines or in geometric shapes, but in naturally curving lines. Rather than each house having a clearing, one could be made for several houses and they could be sited at the edge of the clearing.

Small Dimensions

Bulk and Scale Buildings most compatible with this narrow setting have a small-scaled massing rather than a large single-mass shape, which would be bulky and visually intrusive. This can be accomplished by keeping the wall plane dimensions small, especially vertical ones and those perpendicular to the valley axis. In the gentle depression of the glacial valley, there

are few vertical elements to gauge its depth or scale. Because a number of tall houses in the valley would overwhelm the land form, ground-hugging buildings are preferred. Where the vegetation is low, it is suggested that a building not exceed a height of 22 feet from the average grade elevation of the house. A slightly taller building may be approved if its average roof height is kept below 22 feet by attachment of lower roofs.

Driveways and Parking These physical alterations of the ground surface are best kept small and unobtrusive. Cars and garages may be less visible in the valley if placed on the uphill side of a building rather than on the down slope.

Fences Fences are discouraged in the glacial valleys where their placement would break up the continuity of the linear land form. If they run perpendicular to the valley axis they will be visually distracting.

Shoreline

The Nantucket shoreline consists of 64 miles of sand beaches, continuous except for a few salt marshes. This is the island's great resource; its aesthetic, recreational and natural qualities are universally enjoyed by natives, summer residents, tourists and researchers (fig. 133). The sandy shoreline is in constant flux, a dynamic edge molded by the rhythm of tide, wind and storm. Comparisons of old maps and records with those of current ones clearly show the island's changing configurations (fig. 134).

A 1966 study of Nantucket, *Selected Resources of the Island*, identified 19 distinctive shoreline types based on differences in tides, bluffs, dunes, slopes, surface material, erosion and vegetative cover. The prevalent shoreline character has dry and tide beaches with six to 10 percent slope in a strip 50 to 200 feet wide, backed by bluffs of varying height (up to 100 feet at Sankaty Head and 30 to 40 feet along the northern shore Nantucket cliffs).

The shoreline vegetation is all low and fragile. Salt-tolerant beach grass clings to the wind-piled sand by its thin, spreading root growth. Beach pea, golden rod and, in places, poison ivy join in the stabilization of the sand dunes. However, physical disturbances by humans or storms can easily destroy the delicate grasp of these plants. It is imperative to protect the scenic and largely undeveloped quality of Nantucket's shoreline. The shoreline, at its best, is solely sea, sand and sky. At certain locations or intervals, existing settlements of closely spaced units are seen along the beach front. New development should avoid scattershot building, especially the intrusion of large houses peering down from bluff or dune, and be clustered similarly.

Geography, Vegetation

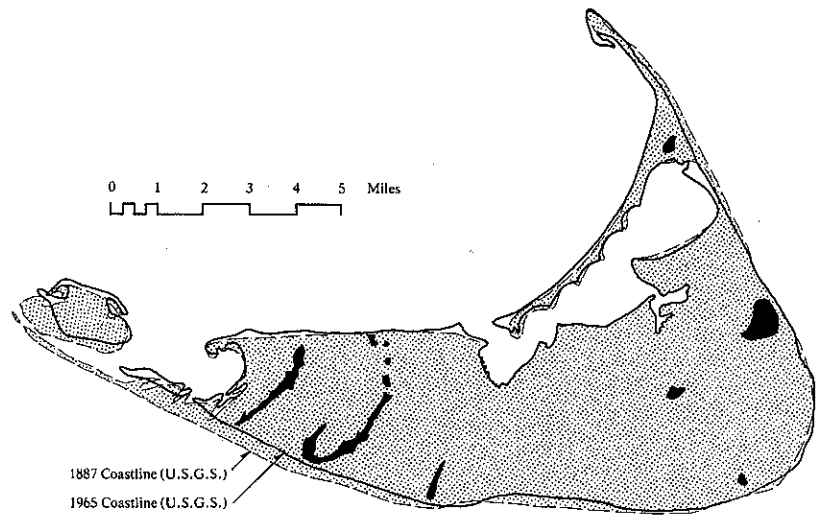


Figure 134. The shoreline is constantly changing because of coastal erosion.

Erosion Nantucket's shoreline is in constant flux, ebbing a good deal more than it flows (well less than five percent of what is lost to erosion at one area of the island is redeposited at another), making erosion a primary consideration in planning for new building at water's edge.

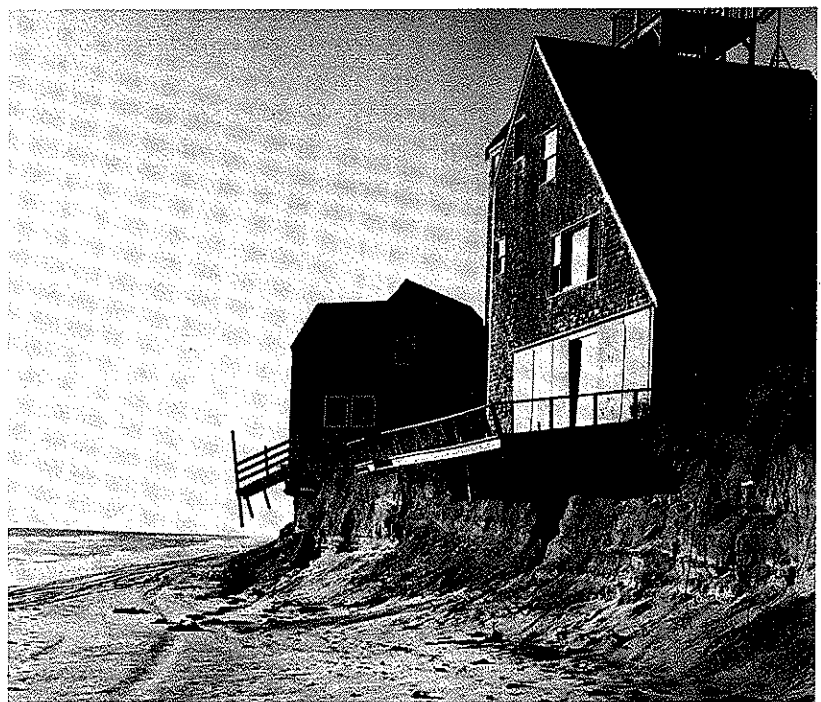


Figure 135. Beach houses hang precariously over Cisco Bluff in the early 1990s. An entire line of waterfront houses here, including these, were lost or relocated.

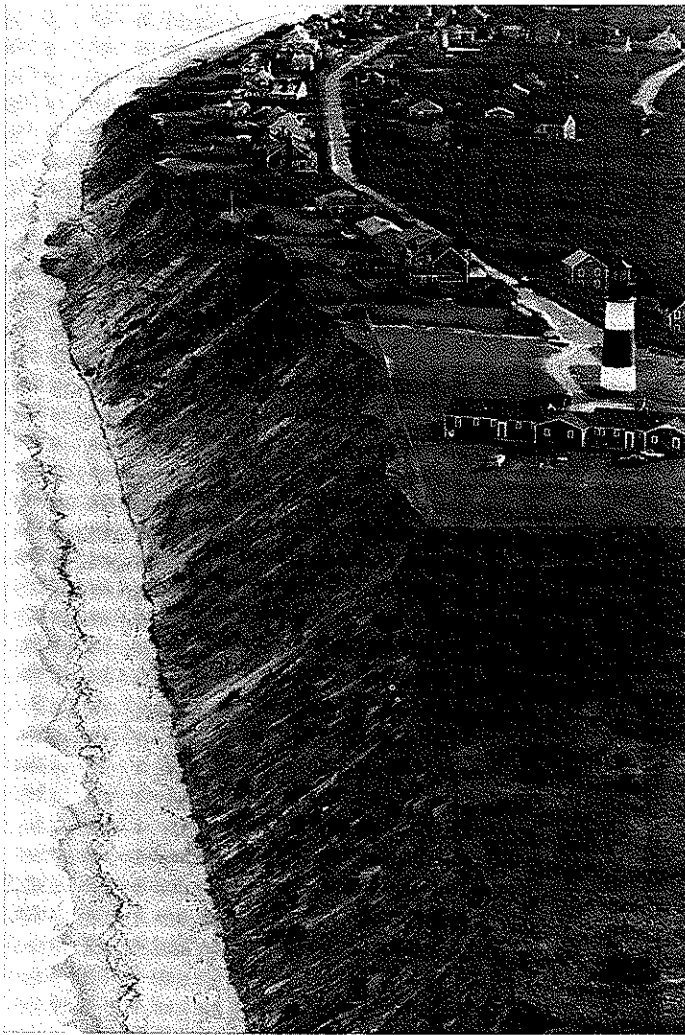


Figure 136. Sankaty Lighthouse is now in grave danger of being lost to the forces of erosion. Since this photograph was taken, approximately 80 more feet of bluff have been lost. The buildings beside the lighthouse have been relocated to another part of the island.

Most of Nantucket is erosional. Patterns examined over 150 years exclude no area of costal shoreline. What varies is the rate of erosion at varying points of the island, and always the effects of the episodic ravages of a single bad storm or storm season. In the recent past, Great Point Light toppled over in a March, 1984, storm (rebuilt in 1987) and several houses along the South Shore (fig. 135) have been lost to erosion, with Sankaty Lighthouse imperiled (fig. 136).

Generally, the island can be divided into four erosional areas of diminishing impact. The worst area is the entire

Four Erosion Zones

South Shore from Tom Nevers to Smith's Point, where literally tens of feet can be lost annually. Second is the eastern bend of the island, encompassing all of Low Beach, from Sesachacha Pond to 'Sconset. While the annual rate of erosion is .8 feet a year along the 100-foot-high Sankaty bluff, for several years prior to 1988, when erosion there leveled off, it was losing six to eight feet a year. But in one fierce storm, a nor'easter in the fall of 1991, upwards of 40 feet of bluff at the lighthouse was lost, leaving it a mere 70 feet from the edge. Similarly, Low Beach in the 'Sconset area—the wide sand expanse on which Cod Fish Park is situated—did not exist 150 years ago. The ocean washed up against the bluff itself. In recent years, a proposed waste water treatment plant on Low Beach was scrapped because in roughly a year (1989-90) more than 150 feet of beach was lost. The third worst area for erosion is the North Shore from Eel Point to town. Although Nantucket harbor waterfront is the least affected by erosion, poorly placed structures can be at peril along this shoreline, too.

Nantucket Shoreline Survey

Site Planning To assess the impact of erosion on shoreline property, builders would be well advised to consult a qualified coastal expert and also the Nantucket Shoreline Survey, prepared by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The survey is available for public perusal at the Atheneum, the science library at the Maria Mitchell Science Center and in the Stackpole library of the Foulger Research Center.

Set Back

A considerable set back from the beach or bluff is mandatory. Wetlands regulations expressly state that the distance from all buildings to the coastal beach or bank be at least 20 times the

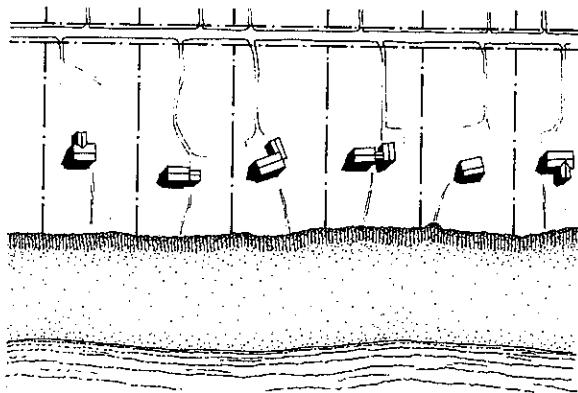
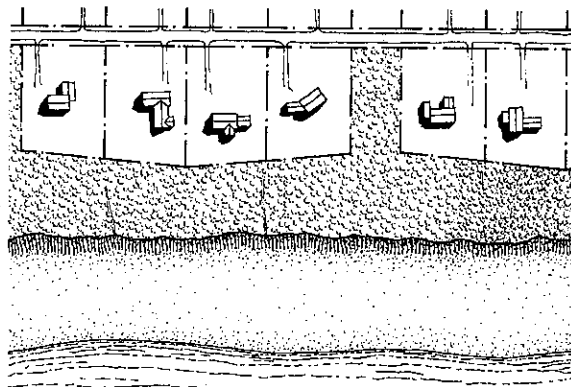


Figure 137. Large uniform lots divide the shoreline.



Lots clustered or set back from the beach edge.

average annual shoreline erosion rate, but this should be viewed as conservative. It is also a good idea for foundations and the house structures themselves to be designed in such a way that they can easily be relocated if necessary. Houses, nevertheless, should be built with regular foundations on solid ground. As foundations, pilings are discouraged.

Lot Layout The subdivision of large lots along the shoreline for private use will very quickly deplete the island's shoreline resource. Consideration must be given to how the beach edge relates to the land behind it. Rational planning should coordinate these inland areas, especially open plains, with the beach frontage. Therefore, the recommendation is to pull all lots back from the shoreline, or cluster them and thereafter preserve the natural state of the beaches through common or public ownership (fig. 137).

Cluster Lots

Building Siting The primary objective is not to have structures visible from the water's edge. A string of buildings should not appear to be marching down the entire edge of the beach. Buildings sited on large lots along the shoreline should be set back from the bluff or dunes along the beach so that they are not visible from it or, at the most, no more than their roofs are visible (fig. 138). Houses should not be built on the dunes, which are protectors of the shoreline. The tenuous dune vegetation must be protected against the wandering traffic of wheels and feet. Foot paths and vehicle tracks through the dunes must be tightly restricted. They should be kept narrow and combined, where possible.

Goal:
Low
Profile

Bulk and Scale Since a building along the water's edge has an extremely visible position, it is important that its bulk and scale be small and unimposing. The low profile beach frontage

Unimposing

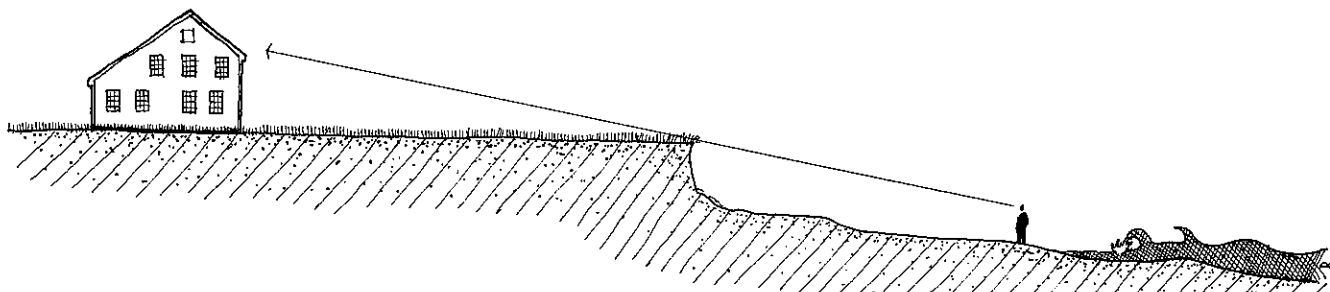


Figure 138. Houses set back from the beach edge are screened from view.

houses along the South Shore east of Surfside Beach are a model design.

Sand/wind Threats

Fenestration Houses along the beach have to learn to live with sand because normal winds and storms will pick up sand and hurl it at them. Large areas of glass are susceptible to scratch damage if close to the sand source during a period of high velocity winds.

Hillside Edge and Elevated Landscape

The hillside edge landscape type includes those linear areas of the island that lack vegetation tall enough to visually absorb new buildings (fig. 139). Because they have a commanding position in the island landscape, buildings placed on these hillsides and crests are highly visible for long distances.

Geography

These areas include the ice contact slopes of the fosse and the edges of the moraine landscape; on the east end of the island, they are narrow stretches of land rising 30 to 50 feet above lower lands. Bowl-like areas elevated and visible on all sides, such as around Sesachacha Pond and Ram Pasture, and coastal areas of the cliffs are also classified in this prominent landscape.

This terrain is visually critical to the land below its slopes. Its hillsides form a border that contains the lower environs and is visible throughout it. Since elevated hillside areas of Nantucket are few and small in area, the design of buildings must be careful to complement these areas. The recommended intent is for buildings to blend into the landscape to minimize their visibility.

Site Planning, Lot Layout The layout of lots and roads should relate to

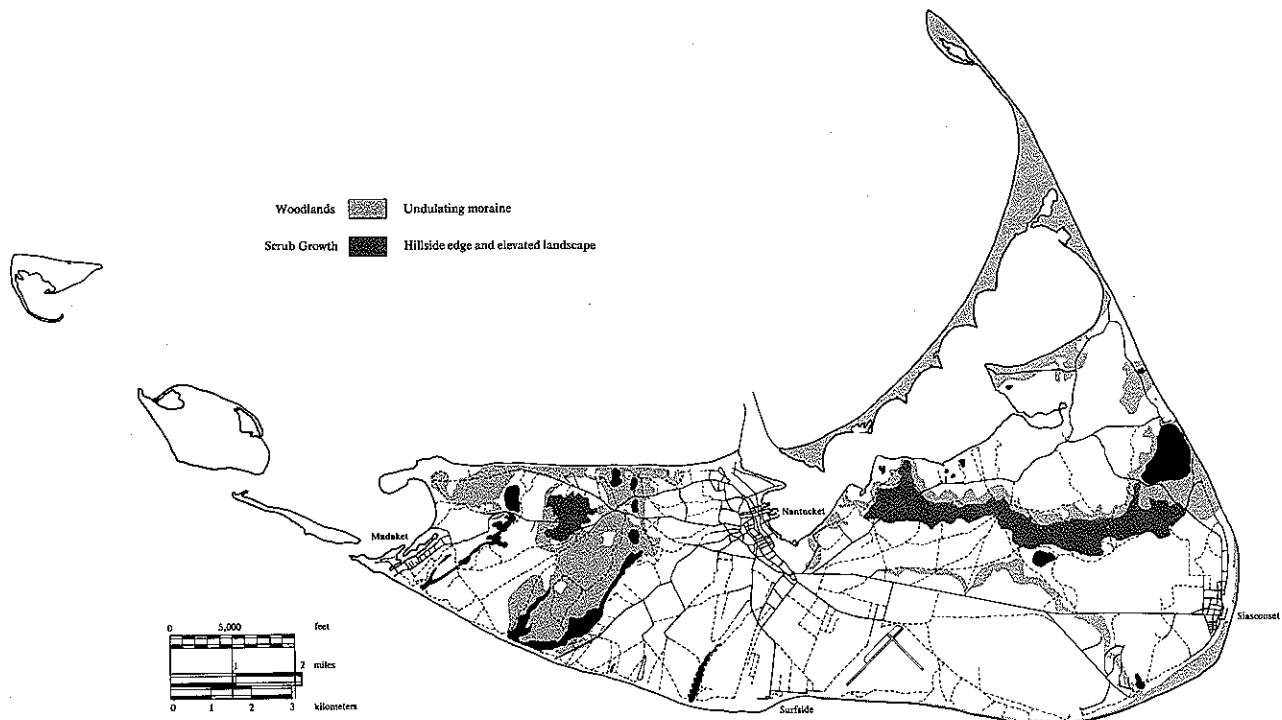


Figure 139. Shoreline, hillside edge and moraine.

the form of the land rather than ignore it, as would be the case with a uniform grid. Lots should be clustered to keep the hillside undeveloped, especially where narrow, to keep new construction off most prominent locations.

Hillside Clusters

Road Layout It is recommended that roads be kept off the hillsides except where necessary. A road pattern that gently curves or slopes with the land is preferred to a straight line or rectangular layout. On steep slopes the road should cross the contours at an angle to reduce its physical and visual disturbance.

Follow Land Contours

Building Sites Buildings should be sited to minimize their prominence, and therefore should not be placed at the top of the slope or crest of a hill where they will be seen silhouetted against the skyline and will be visible at a distance. Rather, it is recommended that they be placed down the slope where they will have the hillside for a background (fig. 140). With this sitting, it is important to have a dark, natural-color roof that will blend into the landscape colors.

Hillsides, Not Crests

Natural Vegetation Because of the elevation of the land, sizable clearings and alterations of the natural vegetation will be distinctly noticeable. Keeping clearings small, associated with individual units, or combining such areas into a naturalistic shape will prevent the landscape from looking fragmented (fig. 141).

Clearings

Bulk and Scale The bulk and scale of a building should be of moderate size so as not to reduce the apparent size of the hillside. A large house bulk is best broken into smaller adjoining parts. Since buildings are already elevated above their surroundings,

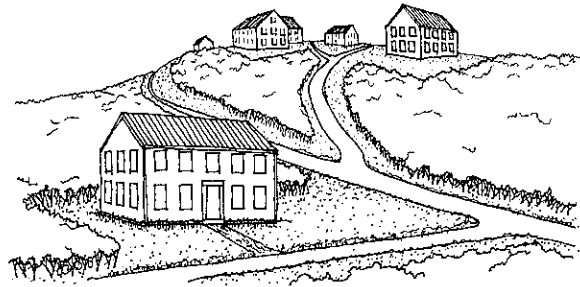


Figure 140. Buildings sited high on the hillside slope or crest.

they do not need to be tall to have a distant vista. Where the vegetation is Low, not low, the building height may be raised accordingly. At the crest of the hill, where there is no backdrop for a building, its height should be restricted to 25 feet overall (fig. 142).

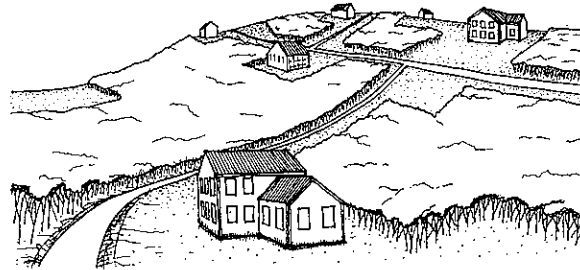
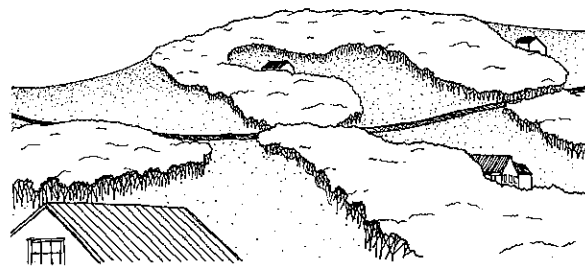


Figure 141. Fragmented or geometric clearings in the landscape.



Naturalistic and connecting clearings.

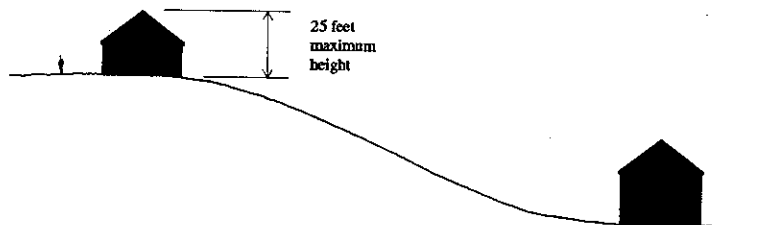


Figure 142. On hill crests buildings should be low, a maximum of 25 feet.

Details The scale of a building's fenestration and the color of its walls and trim must also be carefully considered to keep the house from standing out in landscape.



Figure 143. Altar Rock — peaks and valleys of the rolling moors.

Undulating Moraine (Including the Moors)

When the glacier receded 10,000 years ago, it deposited the terminal moraine that runs through the northern half of the island (see fig. 139, pg. 138). Today this landscape is a soft, undulating terrain of small hills and depressions that roll away from the viewer, hinting of areas hidden behind its crests and marking the distance of vistas. This landscape's timeless, often moody character changes with the shift of light (fig. 143).

Geography

The present appearance of the gently rolling areas of the island is as much the result of human intervention as the unconscious forces of nature. After deforestation in the 17th century, most of the open areas were used as sheep-growing commons. For 150 years these hills were closely clipped by the animals. Periodic burnings

Vegetation

maintained the grassland. Consequently, the moraine area of the island today is almost entirely in low vegetation, mainly grasses and heath, or medium-height vegetation of shrubs, scrub oak and pine growth. Many of these lands are known as 'moors', a heath landscape unique in New England. Unfortunately, their beauty attracts the wandering paths of visitors, destroying the fragile vegetation, as well as new structures, which obliterate the scenic qualities for which they were built. Another threat to the moors is the invasion by taller shrub species. From 1951 to 1971, 30 percent of the heath area of Nantucket was lost to such plant succession. Without periodic management of clearing or burning, the heath-covered moors will soon disappear.

Site Planning, Lot Layout Close clustering of buildings is much more sensitive to the land than is scattered construction. The most damaging practice is to sell the hills for their view potential, which results in houses sited on the crests. If houses were built on every crest, soon all sense of the landscape's rolling contours would be lost. Already this very problem is threatening the moraine landscape across the island. In a better layout,

Preserving the Moors

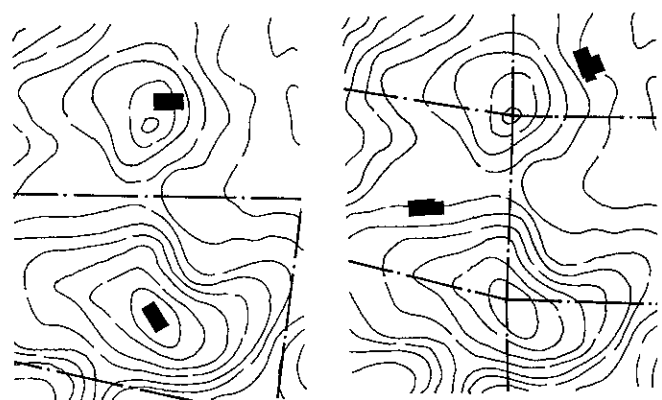


Figure 144. Hills should be shared by several lots rather than claimed by one.

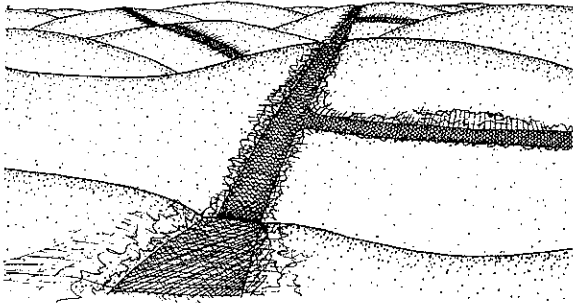
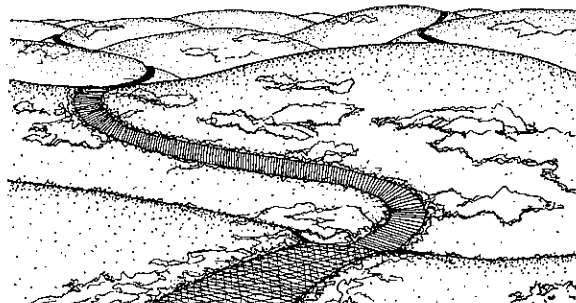


Figure 145. Straight roads disrupt the land form.



Roads should curve with the land and avoid hilltops.

several lots would share a hill or small ridge by backing up to its crest (fig. 144).

Road Layout Straight roads are not appropriate here. New roads should be winding, narrow and preferably unpaved, curving in the gentle manner of the ground over which they pass, their meander periodically passing in and out of view (fig. 145). The number of roads should be kept at a minimum. If the vegetation is not low, roads can be hidden by a layout that flows with the land. If a road cut creates a narrow linear space through tall shrub growth, it should occasionally be opened onto a clearing or distant vista.

Follow Contours

Building Siting The placement of a new building is the most critical decision affecting its design and visual impact. A house that is placed directly on top of one of the hills of the rolling moraine is a self-centered object, concerned only with its own view. It claims

and dominates the hill, asserting its own presence and making the hill appear smaller in size. The moors will be destroyed quickly by even a few buildings placed in such a manner. Instead, a building should be placed on a side slope or lower level area, so the hill will rise behind or in front of the structure and only the roof, or part of it, will be visible across the landscape (fig. 146).

Low or Hillside Placement

Fences Fences that divide the landscape are discouraged except where they are functionally necessary. If erected, they should curve with the land rather than run in straight lines.

Grading and Foundations Although it may be necessary to alter the slope to place a building on the land, it is important to maintain the continuity of the rolling terrain. The building design itself can work with the existing change in grade to minimize alterations of the gentle ground contours. A structure

Preserve Terrain

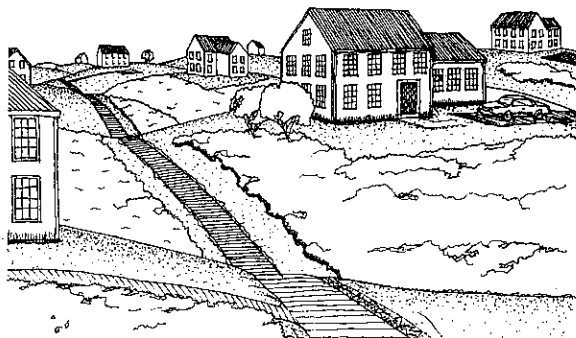
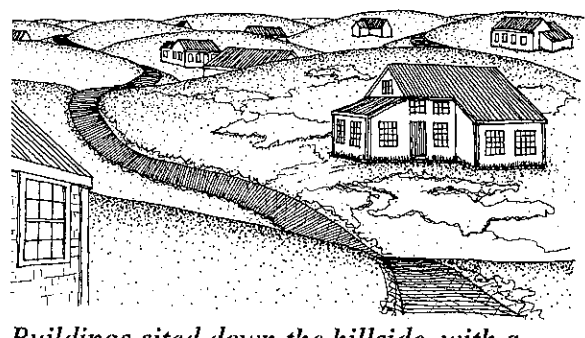


Figure 146. Tall houses sited on hilltops.



Buildings sited down the hillside, with a low profile.

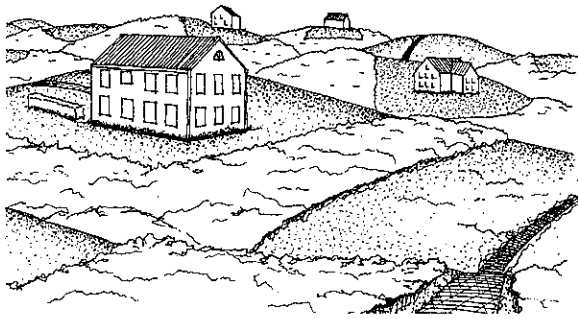
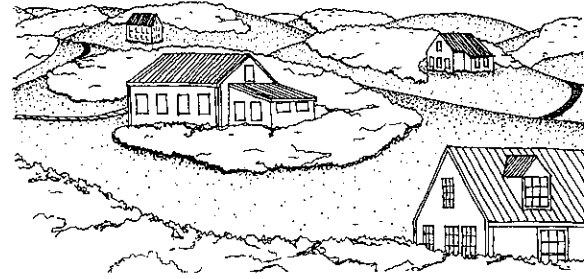


Figure 147. Geometric clearings and houses centered in clearings.



Clearings with natural shapes, emphasizing the land form.

designed for a flat site should not be placed on a platform made by flattening a hilltop or by being carved out of a hillside. Any change of the existing grade, as well as the construction of retaining walls, should be minimized and concealed. New grading should establish contours compatible with the existing land form. In areas of low vegetation, the building's foundation is best kept low, e.g., one block above grade, so that it will hug the ground. This is preferable to a building set on a high base separated from its site and surroundings.

Natural Vegetation The flow of the land is accentuated by the continuity of the natural vegetation. Like a tight skin on the earth's surface, it is set off, in places, by an occasional clump of invading shrubs. Because of its beauty, fragility and unique quality, it is important to preserve as much of the heath ground cover as possible. Yards and mowed lawns appear out of place in this landscape and interrupt its unity. Instead, it is recommended that small exterior spaces be developed in conjunction with the house design. Landscape plantings around a house should have an informal character that blends with the natural vegetation. They can be placed close to a building to help its vertical planes flow easily into the natural setting. Indigenous plants that are well adapted to these site condi-

tions are recommended. The introduction of trees in this terrain, devoid of tall vertical elements, is not recommended, particularly on a hilltop.

The beautiful lowly vegetated moors should not be allowed to grow into a thicket or forest. It is recommended that undesired invader plants be periodically cleared out. With the guidance of the town fire chief, annual burnings might be used to maintain the distinctive heath. Where the formerly sheep-clipped moors have disappeared into shrub vegetation, the landscape can be enhanced by removal of some of the overgrown vegetation. In the hollows, the thicket frequently grows taller than on a hilltop. This partially camouflages the difference in grade elevation between the high and low areas, reducing the drama of the undulating terrain. Clearing only the hilltops will tend to flatten the ground contour and is therefore not desirable. Clearings can be cut in the thicket to provide open spaces and interesting views. Houses are best sited at the edge of large clearings rather than in the middle. Individual residences can carve their own smaller private spaces out of the thicket. Clearings should not be made in geometric shapes, but follow a naturally curving line sympathetic to the land. If many clearings are made separately they will look fragmented and unnatural and will interrupt the landscape continuity (fig. 147).

Appropriate Grooming

Yards/ Lawns

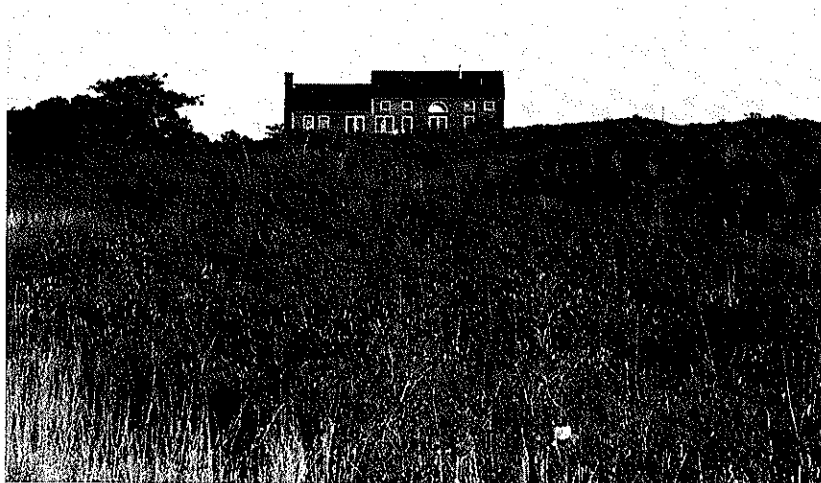


Figure 148. Inappropriate placement of a house on a hilltop.

Driveways and Parking Driveways should be minimized and sited where inconspicuous; they are best if left as two-wheel tracks on the land. All cars should be kept off the hilltops and as low as possible.

**Low
Tracks**

Bulk and Scale The appropriateness of a building's bulk depends on its siting. The more prominently the elevation, the more the bulk should hug the ground and be organized to relate to the shape of the land. If a building must be placed on the crest of a hill, it should be only one story in height. Below a hill or in a valley, the building height may be taller but not so high as to boldly interrupt the rolling horizon (see fig. 142, pg. 139). It is recommended that buildings be small-scale, especially on the vertical plane. Large-scale elements in the wall design that would make the building stand out, including fenestration and monumental facades, are discouraged.

**Height,
Size,
Detail
Limits**

Massing General guidelines apply. In this continually sloping setting, the gable and shed-shaped masses are most appropriate. A building's massing should reflect the unity and balance of the ground undulations, that is, it

should not be too fragmented or disordered. **Dominant Central Mass** A dominant central mass is suggested by the hills. The massing of a large building should be reduced in height and scale along its outer edges to reduce the vertical emphasis of the wall and return the eye to the ground (see fig. 126, pg. 129).

Roofs General guidelines apply. With proper site planning, roofs should be the primary building element seen in this landscape. The sloping roof shapes are best kept simple and ordered to harmonize with the sweeping line of the hills. It is suggested that the line of the roof be extended close to the ground either in the same plane or by additive sheds around a main gable. This will relate the roof line to the ground, which is imperative near the hilltops.

Visibility

The pitch of the roof is a primary factor in fitting the house into the rolling landscape. It is recommended that before the house design is decided on, the site of the building be viewed from various surrounding positions to understand the slopes of the land. All roof lines are intended to be seen as part of a backdrop of rolling hills rather than as objects silhouetted against the horizon (fig. 148).

Pitch

Details Large running shed dormers are specifically discouraged due to their obliteration of the main roof slope. In the undulating landscape, a porch is preferred to an exposed large deck because of its sloped roof; this can be effectively integrated under the main roof plane.

**Porch
vs.
Deck**

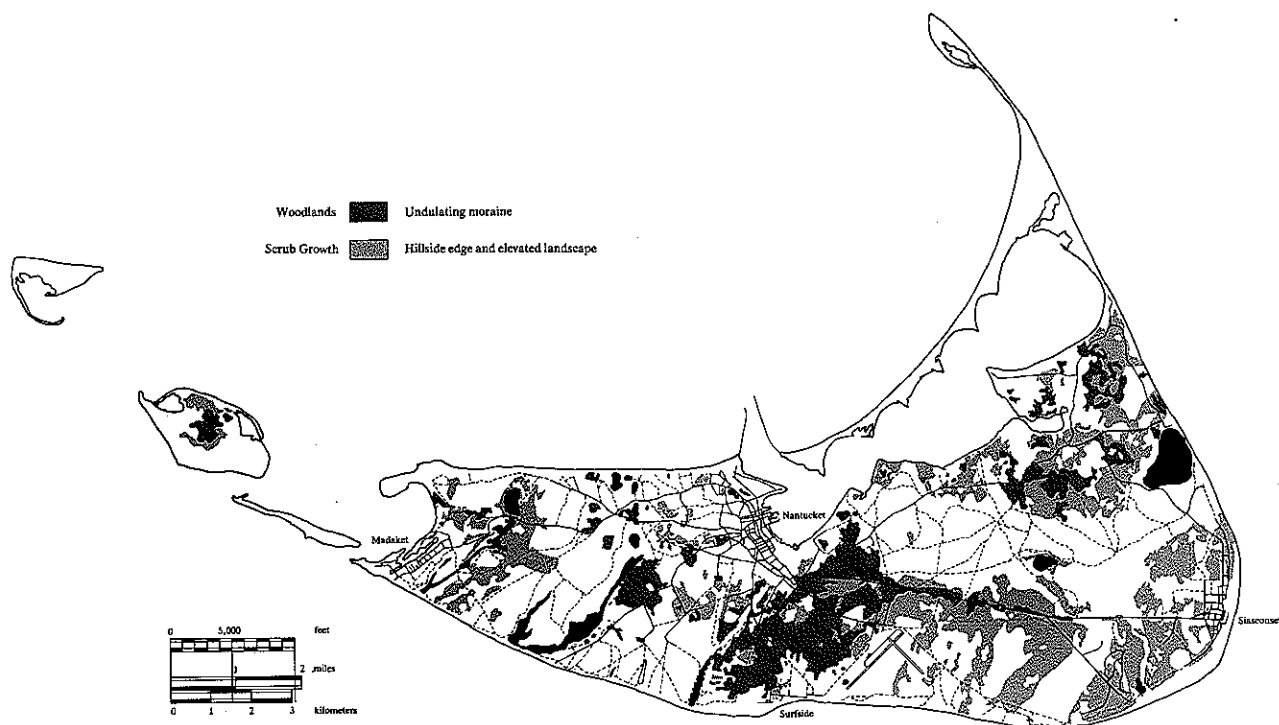


Figure 149. Woodlands and level scrub growth.

Woodlands

Areas of the island that have woodland vegetation above 20 feet, either deciduous or coniferous, absorb the visual impact of development because of this vegetative screening (fig. 149). Building sites in this landscape can be easily concealed (fig. 150).

Although Nantucket is thought to have been covered with mature deciduous forests when first settled by the English, by 1700, it was barren of timber as a result of clearing and fires. Pine forests have been replanted since 1850 but growth has remained very slow. The wooded areas today are limited in size by soil conditions and exposure to harsh elements; the farther inland and more sheltered, the taller the trees. Few exceed 25 feet in height. Today about 35 percent of Nantucket is covered with this woodland vegetation, a distinctive feature of the island (fig. 151). The closeness

of the trunks and branches makes spaces within the woodlands small and intimate. Sight distances are short but are compensated for by the ever-changing light quality filtered through the branches and leaves or needles. The color and texture of the bark and the structure of the trunks establishes the tactile, finely scaled feeling of the setting. The woodlands provide contrast and edges for open areas, and can be attractive for development that capitalizes on their assets.

Site Planning, Lot Layout The planning of subdivisions in the wooded landscape should take full advantage

Vegetation



Figure 150. A house nestled within the woodlands.

of the absorptive visual quality of the woodlands. The lots and roads should be pulled back from the main through roads of the island to maintain an edge of forest screening (fig. 152). To conceal houses, larger lots can be placed on the outer perimeter of a development. Clustering of lots is recommended, and such groupings or other careful lot layout can be employed to maintain large contiguous stands of trees. Care should be taken to prevent cutting the forests into small groups of trees that no longer are a woodland, unable to provide the benefits of shade, wind protection, intimacy, privacy and inherent visual interest.

Road Layout Main roads through woodlands are more pleasant if they are curved instead of straight, eliminating the tunnel effect. Driveways should be narrow and combined where possible. If the lot is small, the vegetation thin or a view of the house is desired, it is useful to think of the driveway as a visual corridor giving a focused, selective view of the building. Site planning that presents only a view of the garage door from the road is neither desirable nor in scale with the forest; it is better to see an interesting corner of the house or its entrance. Parking and turn-around areas should be concealed from public view by their

Set Back Lot Clusters

Visual Corridors

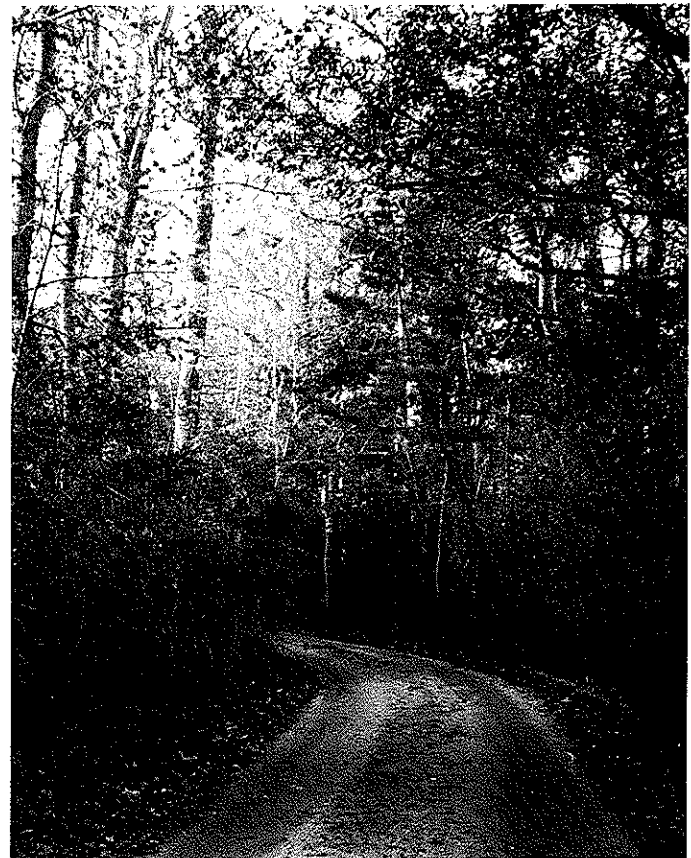


Figure 151. The wooded landscape.

placement behind the forest screen (fig. 153).

Clearings Clearings are notable places in a forest because their enclosed openness provides an appealing contrast. Within clearings, it is recommended that buildings be kept at the edge of the trees rather than placed in their center. Clearings can be created in the forest or along the side of

Build at Edges

the road to provide a greater view and larger scale spaces.

Building Siting Any house in the forest should respond to the character of its setting rather than attempt to make it something else, such as an open grassy lot. The forest can be selectively cleared to make private exterior

Selective Clearing

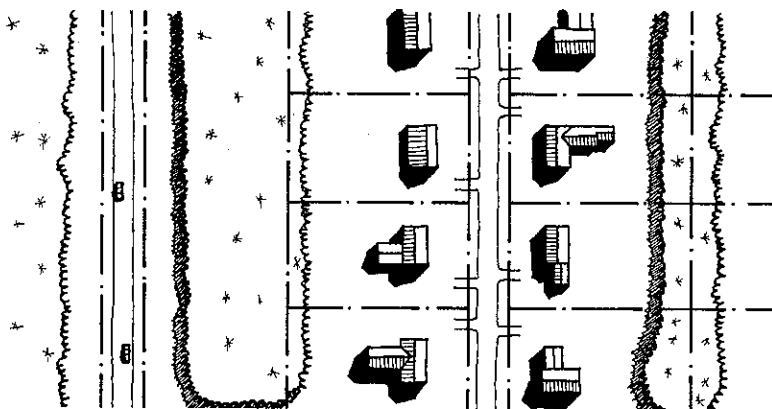


Figure 152. A buffer of trees screens housing subdivisions.

spaces that relate to interior and to outdoor functions.

Relation to Woodlands

Bulk and Scale Within the forest, the bulk of a building should not be apparent from the public way. Natural coloration of a building and breaks in massing behind the intervening screen of vegetation can conceal the size of the building from the road. Because the forest has a strong vertical line formed by numerous tree trunks, the bulk of the building may be tall. However, it is preferred that the building's walls be kept within the height of the forest's canopy, thereby allowing only part of the roof to protrude above it. Slender or vertical parts of the overall building massing, such as towers, can fit into the forest setting if not too large or too numerous.

Massing A very simple geometric volume will tend to stand out in the forest by contrasting with the complex tree structure. To adapt a building to its site, it is recommended that the mass of the structure be broken up. If the building is large it can be composed of a number of smaller, attached volumes. The lines made by the intersection of the component masses will blend into the forest pattern.

Traditional Values

The traditional types of massing of the gabled volume, the hipped box and the shed can be joined together into an unlimited variety of complex masses quite suitable here. Other volume shapes, even curved, if not of great

Variations

scale and if sensitively integrated into it, may be used as component masses of the total building. The idea of compact massing is not as important in the forest as it is in open areas. If done with restraint and moderation, massing may be notched, cantilevered, interpenetrated or otherwise varied.

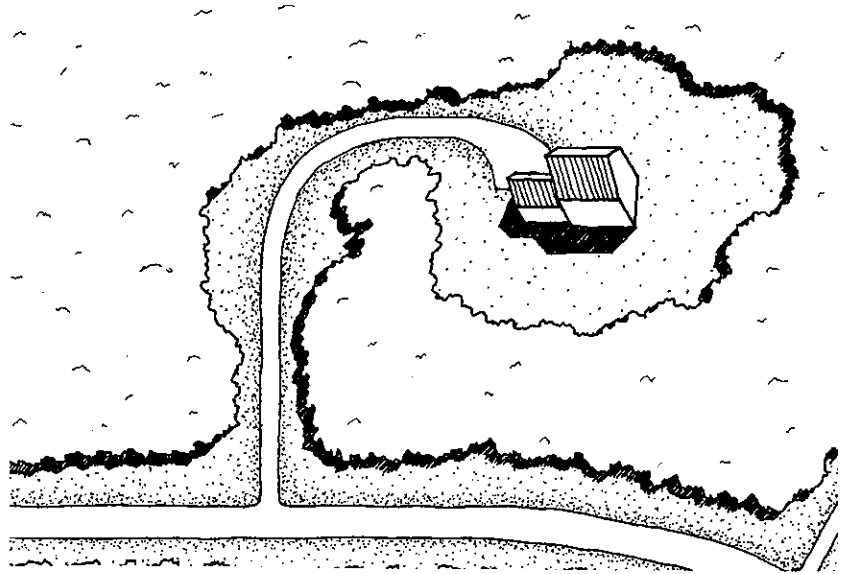


Figure 153. Indirect access allows privacy and natural screening.

Skylights, Chimneys

Roofs General guidelines apply. The roof planes may be of variable pitch according to the design composition. A steeper pitch has a more vertical expression and therefore may be satisfactory in the woods. In the enclosed, shaped space of a woodland, skylights are particularly useful for admitting light and air to the interior. Skylights placed above the forest canopy and visible from a public way should follow the general design guidelines: flat, close, and parallel to the roof. However, if concealed within the woodlands, the design of skylights, their area and location, may vary. Brick chimneys are recommended. However, metal chimneys are visually compatible with the wooded areas and may be

approved. Shiny or reflective finishes are not approved unless concealed.

Details Decks not visible within the forest are not restricted in size. Open, small, wood-member railings make them harmonious with their setting. A house wall color should not be light, causing it to contrast starkly with the forest.

Level Scrub Growth

Because of the rhythm of yearly growth, level scrub growth is gradually covering more and more of the island (see fig. 149, pg. 144). This includes those unmanaged lands where medium-height vegetation, in the range of 5 to 10 feet, has generally overtaken level, open lands with a blanket of coarse, dense plant growth. Major species of this landscape type are the low deciduous scrub oak, low evergreen pitch pines and other hardy shrub invaders that successfully compete with ground cover plants, especially the fragile heath, for light and moisture. This same plant succession is unfortunately also creeping over other island

Invasive Vegetation

landscapes, such as moors and hill-sides. Because of harsh island exposure and poor soil, this scrub growth is closely cropped to its limited height even after it reaches maturity. The short bushy form of this tree species is easily distinguished from those in the woodlands, which have erect, single-trunk configurations. Due to its nearly impenetrable quality, the scrub vegetation provides effective physical barriers and visual screening but it offers little space for movement under its canopy.

Generally, this landscape grouping contributes less than the others to the scenic beauty of the island and thus recommendations for this landscape type are not as extensive as those for other island areas. For the most part, it is a featureless setting that restricts movement or vistas within it. However, its proximity to other valued parts of the environment makes it attractive for development. Therefore, houses built in this landscape classification must, nonetheless, consider their position and profile within the limited area of the island. Building features visible above the vegetation, hence



Figure 154. New construction in level scrub growth — Tom Nevers area.

across the landscape, should be guided by the recommendations for the Open Plains landscape (see page 127). Roofs that stick out above the low scrub or shrub growth are the primary forms needing coordination. Moreover, thoughtful site planning can take advantage of the assets of the thicket for privacy.

Site Planning, Lot and Road Layout

When roads or other paths are cut through the scrub overgrowth, they assume a tunnel-like quality. A curving alignment will cut off monotonous straight vistas. Lot development can be screened from main roadways or visually sensitive locations by the maintenance of intervening borders of intact scrub and shrub growth. On the other hand, tight clustering of houses will allow, functionally and economically, the creation of larger shared clearings. The vegetation offers a good background for spaces and houses within it. In the thick growth a number of clearings can be carved out (in irregular, naturalistic shapes) to create

Natural Privacy, Common Clearings

mini-landscapes and a sequence of spaces to move through. Where several houses are placed in a clearing, it is good to site them along its edges rather than in its center.

Access Driveways and other forms of access can be laid out in an indirect manner to screen the house and surrounding space from the passerby. This will give the occupants greater privacy, while maintaining a natural edge along the road. Shared access points on through roads will favorably reduce the fragmentation of the vegetative backdrop.

Shared Drives

Low, Nestled in Vegetation

Bulk and Scale Buildings will be partially screened by the medium-height vegetation, rarely over 10 feet. Roofs protruding above the overgrowth will mark the presence of the buildings and contribute to the landscape vista. Low buildings nestled in the vegetation are preferred to tall, two-story buildings that are noticeable across the landscape (fig. 154).



Rubble foundation.